GLOUCESTERSHIRE

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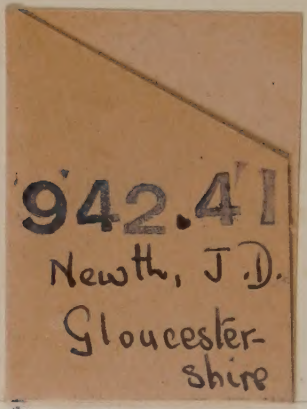

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Preface

THE purpose of this book is to offer something of the countryside and towns of Gloucestershire to those who know them and to those who are strangers in this part of England. If certain districts are treated here rather less fully than the rest, it is because they have already been much described : a catalogue of books and printed matter relating to the city of Bristol occupies the whole third volume of the invaluable "Bibliographer's Manual of Gloucestershire Literature," Mr. A. G. Bradley has done justice to the Wye, and the Cotswolds are perhaps most fortunate of all in the writings of Arthur Gibbs and Mr. H. A. Evans. To these I am indebted, as well as to the county historians—Atkyns, Rudder, Fosbroke—and to Sir Francis Hyett for his "Gloucester in National History." Acknowledgment is due also to Mr. F. W. Harvey and Messrs. Sidgwick and Jackson

for the poem on pages 5 and 6, and to Mr. John Drinkwater and the same publishers for the lines on page 42.

J. D. N.

WESTMINSTER,
1926.

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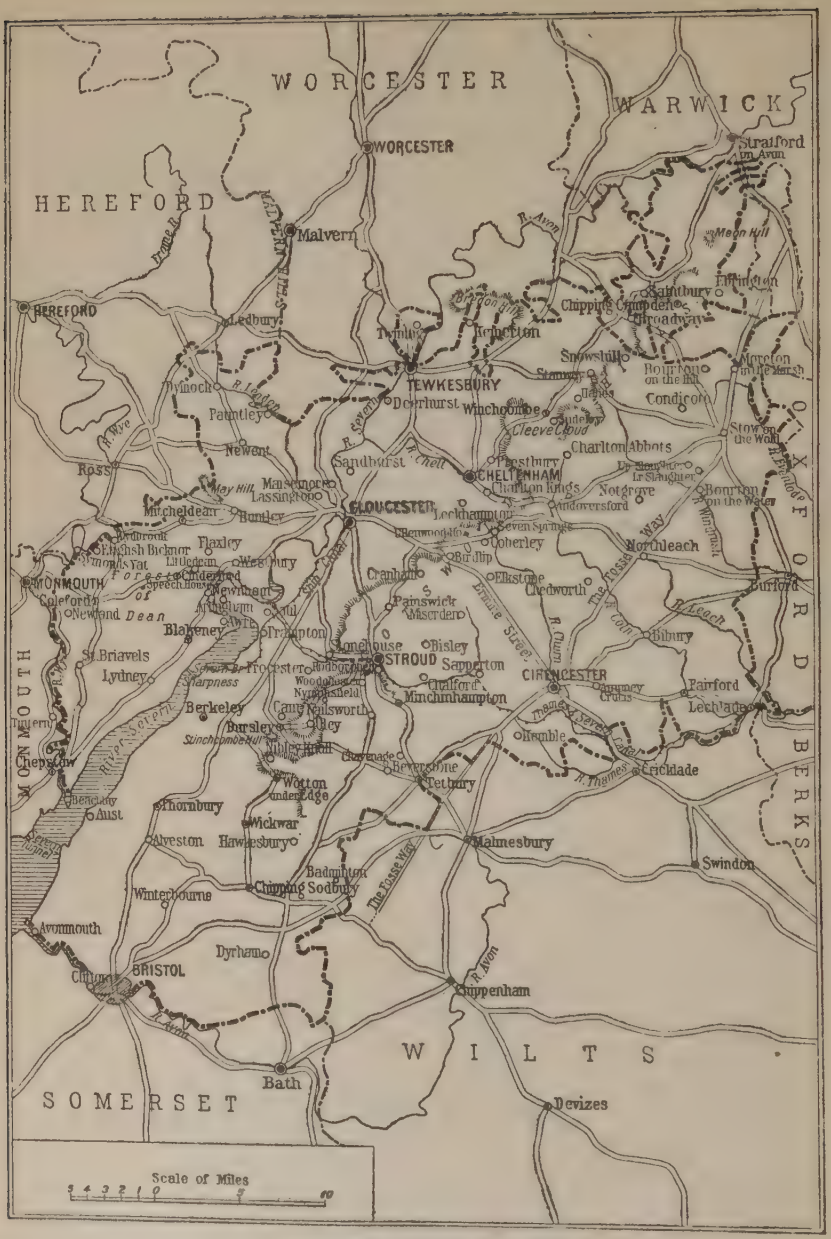

SKETCH-MAP OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

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GLOUCESTERSHIRE

CHAPTER I

WOLD, VALLEY, AND FOREST

Of all the English counties there are few that have not some outstanding feature which serves to disclose the character of the whole: the fens of Lincolnshire, the Sussex downs, the Devon moors, the lakes and fells of Westmorland. But no one phrase can embody the nature of Gloucestershire, for in this county there are three clear divisions of countryside. From the Oxfordshire border westward the land rises steadily till it stands over the Severn valley from Cleeve Cloud to Nibley Knoll, a great escarpment buttressed with steep-sided promontories, and fretted with deep and winding valleys; this broad upland of Cotswold, bearing the headwaters of the Thames, is perhaps the best-known part of Gloucestershire. Rich lowlands go down beside the Severn through the heart of the

county, and beyond that river lies the Forest of Dean, the third and most distinct of the three divisions.

On Cotswold now there is little of the wold or woodland whence the hills had their name, so that a traveller might expect to come upon a bleak and wind-swept country offering no comfort for his journey; yet he will find the surface of the land, which seems so barren and unbroken, to be dimpled with sheltering coombs and cleft by the soft, green river-valleys of Evenlode and Windrush, Leach and Coln and Churn. It is only between those valleys and on the bare heights along the western ridge that Cotswold is unkindly and austere.

The higher open ground was once given over entirely to pasturage for the great flocks of sheep that made Gloucestershire famous five centuries ago, but every year more and more land has come under the plough as the demand for English wool has dwindled. There is furze on the upper wolds, and burnet and all the tiny flowers of the hills, but down beside the streams spring and early summer bring a wealth of gold: marsh marigold and celandine flame bravely in the sun, while buttercup and cowslip and primrose hide paler petals in the chaste shade of the river-banks and the rare hedge-

rows. Most of the woodland, too, lies along the valleys, though copses of dark green fir often cloak the folds in the uplands where gorse and charlock take up the colour of the water-meadows.

No county, perhaps, is patterned with so many footpaths. In the forest, cloistered walks branch off from every turn of the broader roads, and great elms shepherd countless lanes through the valley; but the wolds are laced with narrow, hedgeless footpaths, cream-coloured by their native limestone, that wind from hamlet to pasture and sheepfold, between the harsher slate-blue lines of the metalled turnpike roads. These are the rough, uneven ways of which Shakespeare complained, in days of more difficult travel, that they drew out the miles among the high wild hills and made them wearisome.

Another pattern is thrown across the Cotswolds —that of the wandering stone walls which redeem the monotony of broad sweeps of downland and add still more beauty to the hill-slopes between. There is no mortar in these walls, but they are built of flat, untrimmed stones quarried on the hills and laid one on the other, sometimes crowned with a close-packed row of the same stones set on end. Less than one winter will weather the limestone from its own crude yellow to a delicate

soft grey, and this in turn will bear lichens to fleck with gold the lavender-tinted shadows between the stones.

With this same stone the Cotswold men have always built their houses, so that its quality of rich colour is in the walls and steep-pitched gables of cottage and farm and manor. And everything so built is at one with the countryside, soft and mellowed and venerable, having a charm that is dignified and even grave. The farmsteads on the hills, the hamlets and villages with the beautiful names that lie close along the streams, all have about them a nobility and yet a homeliness; they seem to have been built for all time in this undefiled countryside, where a man may stand in the clean air of the wolds and know himself to be very near the heart of England. Here, if anywhere, endure the simple things that have grown scarcer even since Ruskin spoke of them: "To watch the corn grow and the blossom set, to draw hard breath over ploughshare and spade, to read, to think, to love, to pray—these are the things to make man happy."

There are towns on the Cotswolds—Cirencester, Chipping Campden, Northleach—but they are monuments to the prosperity of the Middle Ages, and to-day the cities and chief towns of the

county are found in the vale of Severn; Bristol, Gloucester, and Tewkesbury are river towns, and besides these there are Cheltenham and Stroud under the hills. It is a rich country in which they are set, a country of deep green fields and ragged orchards among a tangle of lanes. The valley carries the highroad and railway from south-west England to the Midlands, all who wish to go from the south shires into Wales must come across it, and this cross-traffic of two thousand years is the oldest thing in Gloucestershire. It has seen the Romans come and build their villas and go, the lowland abbeys rise and decay, the tempest of war sweep up the valley; it has seen the building of the glorious churches of Gloucester and Tewkesbury which, with the generations of yeomen, seed-time and harvest, have endured.

All down the eastern side of the Severn valley stands the steep, beech-hung rampart of the Cotswold edge, while away in the north-west rise the empurpled hills of Malvern. To the valley-dweller these are the sheltering walls of home, as they were to the Gloucestershire poet who sang of them in Flanders:

> I'm homesick for my hills again—
> My hills again!

To see above the Severn plain
Unscabbarded against the sky
The blue high blade of Cotswold lie;
The giant clouds go royally
By jagged Malvern with a train
Of shadows. Where the land is low
Like a huge imprisoning O
I hear a heart that's sound and high,
I hear the heart within me cry:
"I'm homesick for my hills again—
My hills again!
Cotswold or Malvern, sun or rain!
My hills again!"

Beyond the river, isolated in a little world of its own, is the Forest of Dean, the least changed of the few royal forests remaining since before the Tudors. Small oaks for the most part clothe this hilly country; they were used by the Roman legionaries for smelting iron dug from outcrops of ore in the woods, English shipbuilders knew their quality from the time of Elizabeth until the wooden ships ceased to be, and now they serve a more natural purpose in hiding the unsightly chimneys and gear of collieries.

They say that "bless'd is the eye between Severn and Wye," but there is even more than the beauty of sun-splashed glades and sombre tarns in the forest: the air has a scent of bracken, and nightin-

gales sing from thicket to thicket in the summer dusk. On its western border the Forest of Dean shares with Hereford and Monmouth the grandeur of the lower reaches of the Wye, which here is drawing near its union with that other river of Plinlimmon; lovely and pleasant in their lives, like Jonathan and David, in death they are not divided. Below Tintern the tides come up the Wye, and a little beyond Chepstow it joins the greater river to go out into the Bristol Channel:

> There twice a day the Severn fills,
> The salt sea-water passes by
> And hushes half the babbling Wye,
> And makes a silence in the hills.

In point of scenery the Gloucestershire stretch of the Severn is the least remarkable in the whole of its course, though there is a homely beauty in its windings through the orchards of Minsterworth and Longney before the great bend at Newnham. As soon as it enters the county above Tewkesbury the Severn receives the Stratford Avon, which has marked the Worcestershire boundary since passing Bredon, and before Gloucester is reached the Chelt has brought its waters from a creek in the Cotswolds and the Leadon has come down out of Hereford. At Saul the hard-worked Frome flows

into the north branch of the horseshoe, which here sweeps round a flat peninsula that is little more than a mile wide at the neck, and a number of lesser streams come out of the Berkeley vale through narrow inlets, called by the natives in their Anglo-Saxon "pills." Like the Wye, the Bristol Avon can be claimed in part for Gloucestershire, since it forms the boundary between this county and Somerset. Then below Avonmouth the Bristol Channel swallows up the Severn.

Nowhere in the world can the tidal peculiarity of a "bore" be better seen than in the Severn. The high spring-tides of the Atlantic run into the funnel between South Wales and the Devon coast, increasing in speed as they reach the narrowing of the river at Sharpness, and so restricted where the banks close in on either side between Awre and Fretherne that the water is piled into a rushing wall some three feet high, and roars up the river in a crested wave that has barely spent its force at Gloucester. Every spring-tide brings a bore, but the highest and fiercest come in March, and then the lower-lying fields are sometimes flooded and occasionally sheep are drowned. There is something eerie and ominous in the sweep of this great wave round a bend in the Severn, startling the

cattle and birds of the riverside as it foams its relentless passage up the channel. The hold it has on the mind of the simpler folk is spoken by Gaffer Pearce of Broad Oak, in Mr. Masefield's *Tragedy of Nan.*

The crossing of the Severn, once of the highest military importance, is now an intimate concern of the economic development of Gloucestershire and of the whole of South Wales. At Gloucester, of course, the railway spans the river without difficulty, and at Sharpness it crosses to the forest by a long and graceful bridge, while trains to South Wales have passed under the river from New Passage to Portskewet since 1887 by the great Severn tunnel, nearly four and a half miles in length. But the most southerly road bridge is at Gloucester, so that petrol-driven transport from Bristol, for example, must travel over sixty miles to reach Chepstow, barely fourteen miles away. There is a ferry from Arlingham to Newnham, and a second at the old Roman passage between Aust and Beachley, but these carry no heavy traffic. Before another hundred years are gone, perhaps, there may be a highway thrown across the Severn between these latter points, with what effect on the prosperity of Gloucestershire,

and of Gloucester in particular, it is impossible to tell.

All down the eastern side of the Severn basin the Cotswold edge marks the watershed of southern England, and when there is rain on the hills above Cheltenham, or at the head of the Stroud valley, part of the water finds its way into the Atlantic and part makes off for the North Sea. The head-streams of the Thames that thread the wolds may well travel the breadth of the country before they take all the shipping of the Port of London out to sea, for in this county they are no more than shallow rivulets, and the river Thames is hardly in being above Lechlade. Even so, Michael Drayton thought it the chief praise of Cotswold—

> That thou of all the rest, the chosen soyle should bee,
> Faire *Isis* to bring forth, the mother of great *Tames*,
> With whose delicious brooks, by whose immortal streames,
> Her greatnesse is begun.

A canal joins Thames and Severn, tunnelling the watershed at Sapperton, but this is now derelict for most of its length. Of vital importance, however, is the Gloucester and Sharpness canal, not because a dozen miles of river-distance are saved, but because ships of over a thousand tons can go

up to the city, which otherwise would have ceased long since to be a port.

But the chief lines of communication through the county are the roads, rapidly regaining their ancient importance. Many of these follow the Roman highways of nineteen hundred years ago, and a few of them have been laid in the still earlier tracks of the Britons. Gloucestershire was on the western frontier of Roman Britain, and its importance as a bulwark against the retaliatory raids of the Celts from the Welsh hills is witnessed by a long line of encampments cut in the Cotswold rampart. Where the Romans settled, there they invariably built roads—straight, raised above low-lying country, well-founded and paved to bear centuries of marching and counter-marching.

Cirencester was their centre in the west of England, and through this camp passed the two great roads, the Fosse Way from Exeter to Lincoln, and the Ermine Street from Silchester to Gloucester; the Akeman Street went off from Cirencester to Bicester, St. Albans and Colchester, and there was a network of minor roads. When the land was forced into peace, the Romans learnt to look upon this as one of the most pleasant parts of Britain, and they made towns at Cirencester and

Gloucester, and built magnificent villas in the hollow places of the hills.

The sudden departure of the Romans left the native Britons, after long years of inaction, unfit for war, wherefore in 577 the West Saxons conquered at Dyrham and overran hill and valley, and peopled the country with a tribe called the Hwiccas. Yet a third invasion was that of the Danes, but the dwellers in this district of England were left in peace by Alfred, who was content to divide his conquests into shires for their better administration.

Nor did the Norman conquest drive the people of Gloucestershire from their homes, as the first armies that came from Gaul had done. From this time onward, as will be shown, the county was again and again a turning-point in national history, partly because of its position as the strategic centre of the west, and partly on account of its contact with the persons of Norman and Plantagenet kings. Here was the cockpit of England's three chief civil wars: the struggle between Stephen and Matilda raged about the castles of Cirencester, Beverston, and Bristol; Queen Margaret marched the whole length of Gloucestershire, and at Tewkesbury made her last stand for the House of Lancaster; the siege of

Gloucester turned the issue between Charles I. and Parliament.

The seeds of modern England were nowhere sown more thickly than in Gloucestershire, by the Cotswold woolmen and the merchant adventurers of Bristol. Early in the Middle Ages the quality of the Cotswold fleece was recognized, and throughout the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries there was a great trade in the export of wool grown on these hills. Cirencester, Chipping Campden, Northleach, and several smaller towns were built and beautified by the prosperous merchants, who made them the marts wherein they bought from the local farmers and sold to the dealers of London and the Continent.

With the advantage of raw material close at hand, it was natural that an industry of cloth-making should spring up in Gloucestershire, particularly in the valleys around Stroud, where the streams run with water peculiarly suitable for dyeing. In the reign of Elizabeth large numbers of Flemish immigrants settled in this countryside, bringing the experience of weaving as a long-established craft, so that almost every cottage on the favoured hillsides had its hand-loom. In time, little mills appeared along the streams, and their

stocks thudded a bass accompaniment to the cheerful rattle of the cottage looms, and all went merrily until the coming of steam-driven machinery at the beginning of the last century. Then the great factories of the north struck the knell of Gloucestershire clothworkers; it was useless for them to lift up their eyes to the hills, whence had come their help, for foreign competition had killed the Cotswold sheep, and now the flocks were pastured for their flesh instead of for their wool.

Sad as was the passing of this great industry, the weavers suffered less hardship than might have fallen to them. Steam-power mills were set up in the valleys at Stroud, Nailsworth, Cam, and elsewhere, and there was employment for those who could no longer earn a livelihood in their homes. It had served its purpose, not only in the foundation of English economic prosperity, but also because the clothiers encouraged the merchants down in the ports below to push their wares beyond the seas, and so to show for the first time the inexhaustible possibilities and rewards of maritime commerce and discovery.

Older even than the Cotswold woollen industry, and still flourishing, is the agriculture of the lowland, in the Gloucester plain and particularly in

A COTSWOLD SHEEP PASTURE.

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the vale of Berkeley. Here are the fat lands, dark green meadows of lush pasturage, and fields of clover and roots for winter feeding. From the dairies of this countryside come the famous thick Double Gloucester cheeses, which, unlike those of Stilton and Cheddar, have not lent their name beyond their place of origin.

Prominent in political and economic history, Gloucestershire takes still higher place in national religious development. The whole course of Christianity in England—Catholic, Protestant, Nonconformist—can be traced in churches and men of the county. "As sure as God's in Gloucestershire," once a saying common through the breadth of the land, arose from the fact that here were far more mitred abbeys, monasteries, priories and cells than in any other county. Most of these houses were built by Benedictines, and there must have been few shepherds and husbandmen in medieval Gloucestershire who were beyond the sound of vesper bells from the valleys when their day's work was ending. It is strange that the dawn of the Reformation should have been brightest over this stronghold of Rome, for Wycliffe, Tyndale, Fox, and Hooper were men who led the awakening for which the slender monument stands

over the Berkeley vale as a witness and a symbol. And a Gloucestershire man, George Whitefield, the passionate preacher of the Wesley movement, was to take his fellows still further from the ancient Church.

The people among whom these tremendous beginnings were made have not changed greatly from the ploughboy for whom Tyndale gave his life. Easier travel and closer communications, with the inevitable wider cast of the net of commerce, have tended to destroy the distinctive characters and dialects of the English counties, but as yet the hand of the spoiler has fallen lightly on the West. Although they are not a people apart, in the same way as are those of Devon and Cornwall for instance, the simpler Gloucestershire folk east of Severn preserve their Anglo-Saxon nature. Slow of thought and slow of speech, they have little of the superstition that lingers on the moors between the Bristol and the English Channels, and none of the tense tragic emotion of which Mr. Hardy shows the Dorset yokel to be capable. The natives of the Forest of Dean are another race, retaining, more completely perhaps than any other division of the English people, their original peculiarities and physical independence. This individuality is partly due to the ancient con-

stitution of the Free Miners of the Forest, under which they lived for so many centuries comparatively free of outside influence, and partly because it is as true to-day as it has been for two thousand years, that when you cross the Severn from east to west you go over from the country of the Saxons into the land of the Celts.

The talk of the forest miners is quicker, sharper, more akin to Welsh, than the broad dialect of the West Saxons on the Cotswolds and in the Severn plain. This latter is the true speech of Gloucestershire, and it is not easily understood by the stranger. Two labourers will meet in the village street after the day's work, and their talk will go something in this fashion :

George. "Wull, 'Enery, wur bist thee a-gwine ?"

Henry. "I be aafter Dan. 'Ast zid un doon strit, Jarge ?"

George. "Naw, the' cassent vindt un thur ; 'e be gawn ower wi' th'owld 'ooman t'Ooton."

Which, being interpreted, means that Henry is out to find Daniel and asks George if he has seen him in the street, to which he gets the answer that he will not find his friend there, since he has gone with his wife to Wotton.

That Gloucestershire has remained so purely

English is due largely to the absence of any permanent foreign element in the county. The Normans left their mark by the great abbeys of Gloucester and Tewkesbury and a number of lesser churches, but they had little influence on the speech and manners of the people. It is true that some of us bear the names of those who came over from the Low Countries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, fleeing from persecution, to teach and ply the craft of weaving in the Stroud and Dursley valleys; but our Flemish forefathers were of the same stock as the tribes who had made the journey a thousand years before, from the lands about the mouths of Rhine and Scheldt, the most southerly territory of the Anglo-Saxons.

Besides their own language, the true Gloucestershire people keep the old characteristic love of simple out-door games. Captain Dover's wrestling, leaping, back-sword play and the rest passed long since from Cotswold, and their place was filled by that village cricket which was the splendid merry exercise of rural England half a century ago. Sir James Barrie has written delightfully of this game that is more than a game: "A rural cricket match in buttercup-time, seen and heard through the trees; it is surely the loveliest scene in England

and the most disarming sound. From the ranks of the unseen dead for ever passing along our country lanes on their eternal journey, the Englishmen fall out for a moment to look over the gate of the cricket-field and smile." Perhaps Barrie made a home in Gloucestershire because there is no other county where the old spirit of cricket is so long in dying; the murderous wickets, the grass knee-deep in the outfield, the postman punching the parson for three sixes in one over, the rigour of the game, and the hearty good fellowship of it.

There is an essential Englishness, too, in the melodious names of Gloucestershire: Maisemore, Lassington, Minsterworth, Hartpury, in the vale; the sonorous Norton Fitzwarren, Hawkesbury Upton, Uley-cum-Owlpen; Colne St. Aldwyn, Stow-on-the-Wold, Nymphsfield, Sapperton, Windrush, Miserden. When you have learnt to know the countryside, and can tell the wold names and the valley names, you will know that these last are

> In the highlands, in the country places,
> Where the old plain men have rosy faces,
> And the young fair maidens
> Quiet eyes.

It was Stevenson too who wrote that, if landscapes were sold, like the sheets of characters of his

boyhood, one penny plain and twopence coloured, he would go the length of twopence every day of his life. Here he might spend his money well. But there is more than wealth and variety of colour in the beauty of Gloucestershire; there are the contrasting scenes of forest and lowland and wold, the pleasant streams and rivers, the great woods of beech, the footpaths and lanes, and a hundred other delights in the charm of this "shire of the fair city."

CHAPTER II

GLOUCESTER

For a city of such antiquity Gloucester carries her years with remarkable vigour ; she is occupied with two or three important industries and all the affairs of the port of Gloucester, besides the spasmodic busyness of a county and market town. Yet of all the cathedral cities, there can be few that hold so clear a mirror to English history. Whether she would or no, Gloucester has never been allowed to withdraw into the genteel retirement of such sisters as Lincoln and Winchester, for she stands at the cross-roads of the west, the turnpike of England and Wales. Here is the most southerly road-bridge over the Severn, at a point commanding the broad plain between the hills of Worcestershire and Wales, and the city stands across the lowland road from the south-west of England to the Midlands and the north. Little wonder, then, that more than one king has found this a turning-point in the highway of national history.

More lively witnesses than Roman pavements, coins, and pottery, are the four main streets that come from north, south, east and west to meet at right angles in the centre of the city, for the ground-plan of Gloucester remains in chief outline as it was laid out by the military engineers of the Cæsars nearly nineteen hundred years ago. It was in the forty-fourth year of our Lord that Aulus Plautius bore the eagles across Britain and built here a camp to be a base of operations against the troublesome native tribes beyond Severn; the people he found in possession of the settlement were the Dobuni, a tribe spread over the Cotswolds and this side of the Severn valley. It is unlikely that the Dobuni owned more than a collection of huts, but this they called Caer Glow, "the fair city." The legions re-christened their camp Glevum, built and developed it so that it became one of the four self-governing Roman "colonies" in England, a centre of their highly organized military and domestic life until the withdrawal from the island at the beginning of the fifth century.

For six or seven generations the Britons had lived in enforced peace, absorbing a civilization that they were not called upon to defend, so their sinews

of war were softened and the Roman evacuation left them unable to withstand the West Saxon advance upon the Severn valley. The victory of the Saxon chief, Ceawlin, at Dyrham in this county, gave him possession of Glevum; and the city prospered, first as the capital of the Saxon Hwiccas and later as a tributary of the English kingdom of Mercia, so that by the end of the seventh century Bede could call "Glowe-Ceastre" one of the noblest cities in the land.

From this time until Canute the Dane became supreme in England Gloucester was no less free than any other town from the strife and distress of unsettled leadership, but with the comparative peace of the Northmen's rule she held her place as one of the three capitals of the country: the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells how "at Easter the king wore his crown at Winchester, at Pentecost at Westminster, and at Christmas at Gloucester." When William I. had completed his conquest he frequently spent Christmas at Gloucester, and on one of these occasions he conceived and planned the great Domesday survey of England; it was in midwinter 1085, according to the Chronicle, that "the King had a great council and very deep speech with his Witan about this land, and how it

was peopled and by what men ; then sent his men over all England into every shire, and caused to be ascertained how many hundred hides were in the shire, or what land the King himself had, and cattle within the land, or what dues he ought to have in twelve months from the shire."

The next reign, that of Rufus, saw the nave of Gloucester Cathedral rise on its splendid pillars under the guidance of Abbot Serlo, and in 1136 the Abbey of Llanthony was founded close to the river ; its heavy, battlemented gateway and great granary may still be seen almost among the docks, beside the road to Hempsted. Henry I. delighted to be at Gloucester, for the Severn gave him the finest lampreys, but neither of the first three Plantagenets had time to stay in their provincial cities. When the disaster on the shores of the Wash ended John's calamitous reign it was at Gloucester that William Marshal placed the boy Henry III. on the throne which he was to occupy for so many years, crowning him with a plain circlet of gold for lack of the royal crown ; and it is said that throughout his life Henry loved Gloucester better than London.

Edward I., perhaps the greatest lawgiver among our kings, held two parliaments here, and at the

first of these were passed the Statutes of Gloucester, which, by substituting the king's justice for the oppression of the baronial courts, marked the beginning of wider liberty for the common people. Halfway through his reign the second Edward was entertained by the abbot of St. Peter's, and when he came again it was for burial, after the murder at Berkeley in 1327 "with consent and by practise of his cruell Queene."

In the Wars of the Roses, Gloucester unexpectedly took the Yorkist side, and Edward IV. found the city loyal to him when he was marching up to Tewkesbury on Margaret's heels. Of his youngest brother, Richard III., it is believed that he was in Gloucester when he gave orders for the murdering of his nephews in the Tower. The Tudors saw little of the city, though Henry VIII. came with Anne Boleyn when the axe of disfavour was already casting its shadow over her. Near the end of this reign the Abbey of St. Peter, almost five hundred years old, was elevated to the dignity of Cathedral of the new bishopric of Gloucester, Abbot Wakeman—whose unpleasant cenotaph is at Tewkesbury—taking the see.

The second Bishop of Gloucester was John Hooper, most advanced of Protestants. He was

given the mitre by Protector Somerset and enjoyed the approval of young Edward VI., but even Cranmer protested that he should modify his views. The clergy of Gloucestershire found that in Bishop Hooper they had a master who would brook no trifling with their calling, and it is recorded that he discovered some of them to have a woefully scant acquaintance even with the Ten Commandments. In 1552 the bishopric of Gloucester was merged in that of Worcester under Hooper, but the next year saw Mary's ascent to the throne and the sweeping reaction in favour of Catholicism. Hooper was among the first to be seized, and if his Protestant beliefs had hitherto been strong, they now became fanatical. He was condemned for a detestable heretic, to be burned in the city which he "had infected with his pernicious doctrine." An old house opposite St. Nicholas' Church in Westgate Street is still pointed out as his lodging the night before he was burnt in St. Mary's Square on February 9, 1555, on the spot close against the Cathedral precincts where the memorial stands in honour of his martyrdom "for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God."

Nearly a hundred years passed in the quiet and prosperity that was the gift of Elizabeth before the

tumult of civil war thundered once more outside the gates of Gloucester. It is not possible to give here the full story of the siege of Gloucester, but enough may be said to show how, at one time, the issue of the war depended on the city.

In July, 1643, the Royalist army took Bristol and so came near being masters of the middle west. King Charles saw his cause at the point of triumph after some fifteen months of fighting, and the only question affecting his immediate course of action was whether he should march straight on London, or first turn aside for a few days and take Gloucester. No one about the king considered that Gloucester could hold out, and there was talk besides that the military governor of the city, Colonel Edward Massey, was a soldier of fortune who might easily be won over. So it was decided to lay siege to Gloucester and complete the conquest of the west.

The city was walled in on every side, partly no doubt by rebuilt Roman fortifications. An account of an "Excursion" twelve years before the siege gives a description of its defences: "This Citty is wall'd about, except onely that part of the Towne that is securely and defensively guarded by the River; in the wall there is 6 Gates, for the Ingress

and Egresse of Strangers and Inhabitants. In the midst of the Citty is a fayre Crosse, whereto from the 4 Cardinall Windes, the 4 great and principall Streets thereof doe come."

Charles arrived outside the walls on August 10 and summoned the city to surrender. A respectful but very definite refusal came back from the governor, the mayor and aldermen, and both sides at once prepared for the siege. The king had with him thirty thousand well-armed men, and the whole countryside was open to his foragers, while the garrison of about fifteen hundred had but fifty barrels of gunpowder and a few poor cannon. That the Royalists did not at once assault the city is significant of the ease with which they expected to secure its capitulation. They set up their main battery on Gawdy Green, where is now Brunswick Square, and thence "shot divers grenadoes into the towne; and one," the town clerk wrote in his diary, "fell into the street near the Southgate, but a woman coming by with a payle of water, threw the water thereon, and extinguished the phuse thereof." On Saturday, August 19, "a cannon ball, its force being almost spent, running along the ground, struck down a pigge, which our soldiers ate, and afterward jeered the enemy therewith. . . .

They also shot great stones out of their morter pieces, which did little hurt, and killed none."

The garrison and townsfolk kept good heart with their cheerful clerk, and there was little talk of surrender. So the conflict wore on into September, and now the city was near the end of its supplies, both of victuals and of ammunition. A proclamation in London brought home the vital consequences of the siege: "the city of London and parts adjacent cannot be long in safety if Gloucester be lost." Hastily the Trained Bands were recruited and mustered, and on August 24 they set out for the west, eight thousand strong, sped with prayers, and marching to the tune of psalms. Essex brought this relieving force to the Cotswolds without opposition and, throwing off Prince Rupert at Stow, arrived on the edge of the hills above Cheltenham on September 5. Three days later he entered the city in triumph, and the cause of Parliament was saved.

But the charm of Gloucester to-day does not rest on the facts of written history alone, for she is rich in visible monuments of the past, from "the 4 great and principall Streets" of the Prætorian camp to the timbered house of Robert Raikes in Southgate Street. And chief of all these relics is

the glorious Cathedral of the Holy and Undivided Trinity.

To stand for the first time in the nave of the Cathedral is an unforgettable experience, for there is no other building left to us that has about it so much of the greatness of the Norman craftsmen. Usually they built short, squat pillars of sturdy strength, forceful reminders of their stalwart castles; but Abbot Serlo in 1089 caused to rise at Gloucester columns of greater height so that their massive bulk took on an alien grace. From the west end of the nave these pillars are seen to range down towards the choir so close together that they seem to touch, and about the base of each are red stains from the flames of the fire in 1122. Whether those superstitious people had most in mind resistance to the great power of the spirits of evil, or whether they built for permanence through the passage of war and rough weather, they achieved the supreme art of creating beauty without the aid of fragility and delicacy in stonework.

For just six hundred years the principal place of pilgrimage in Gloucester Cathedral has been the tomb of Edward II., whose body was brought here for burial by Abbot Thokey after the dastardly murder at Berkeley in 1327. Edward of Carnarvon

was one of those to whom honour came only after death, in his case at the end of twenty miserable years of kingship. Very soon the news of his horrible death spread among the people, and he was looked upon as a martyr, worthy even to be a saint. Above his tomb, under a low arch on the north side of the choir, was built a splendid canopy on exquisitely fashioned shafts. For grace and pure loveliness this is often held to be the most beautiful monument in England, and indeed it is the greatest glory of medieval stonework. Edward lies in his kingly robes, chiselled in alabaster; his face may have been modelled from a death-mask, for it bears traces of pain and shows most clearly the weakness of the man.

It is strange how the first and the third Edward, both great kings in their ways, were separated by this incapable; yet history has other instances that contradict the example of Philip and Alexander, and one of these may be seen in effigy on the floor of the choir at Gloucester. This is Robert of Normandy, eldest son of the Conqueror, whose figure is carved in bog-oak and coloured: he lies with his legs crossed—token of the crusade which alone stands to his credit in the adventurous early years of a wasted life. The wooden carving has

more humanity than the stone, and it is as remarkable now as three centuries ago, when a visitor came particularly to see "that unfortunate Prince Robert, whose eyes were pluckt out in Cardiff Castle after he had endur'd a long and tedious imprisonment there: his Portraiture lieth loose and is of Irish wood painted, which neither rotts nor worme-eats. He lyeth crosse-legg'd, with his Sword and Buckler, and soe as any man may with ease lift up this his wooden Statue."

The body of Edward II. was refused burial at Bristol, Malmesbury, and Kingswood because the monks were fearful of Queen Isabella, but Thokey's courage was immediately justified by the countless pilgrims who brought offerings to the shrine in St. Peter's Abbey (elevation to the dignity of a cathedral came only in 1541). Two years after he buried his king, the loyal abbot died and was succeeded by John Wygmore, who found an ever-increasing stream of wealth flowing into his treasury. Wygmore used the money in a remarkable way: apparently the broad and simple curves of Norman architecture no longer satisfied the taste of the day, so he and his builders evolved a manner of panelling, straight lines, and tracery that was the birth of the Perpendicular style, and

with this they clothed the south transept. Mr. Thomas Hardy, who was an architect before a writer, has a poem, "The Abbey Mason," in which he tells of the transformation made by the Gloucester inventor of the Perpendicular style of Gothic architecture:

> Panel and circumscribing wall
> Of latest feature, trim and tall,
>
> Rose roundabout the Norman core
> In prouder pose than heretofore,
>
> Encasing magically the old
> With parpend ashlars manifold.

After Abbot Wygmore died, the remodelling was carried throughout the transepts, presbytery and choir, so that all the Cathedral except the nave was veiled in a web of decoration.

The great window that forms the whole east end of the choir was the largest in England,* but size is not its only virtue, for most of the glass is of a marvellous silvery white that throws up in greater beauty the delicate tints of red and blue in which is painted the crowning of Our Lady, and the whole is set in tracery like petrified lace-work. Two slim but-

* The east window of Liverpool Cathedral, consecrated in 1925, is slightly wider. Gloucester, however, has the greater area of glass.

tresses support the window from without, but they are so cunningly pierced that no disfiguring shadows are thrown ; nor do the whispering gallery and the roof of the Lady Chapel shut out the light.

From the old abbot's door in the north aisle of the nave you come out into the cloisters. On four sides of a green garth run the magnificent alley-ways, roofed with fan-vaulting of indescribable loveliness. In one cloister there is a row of recesses in which the monks worked at their books, and along another the washing trough of their lavatory is perfectly preserved. Close by this trough an arch-way gives on to the garth, and from here the tower may be seen in its full majesty. The severe out-line of the north aisle is tempered by warm rose colouring in its walls, yet there is plainness enough to enrich by contrast the exquisite panelling of the tower that leads the eye up to battlements and pinnacles traced delicately against the sky, almost too ethereal to have been made with hands.

There is much more to see in Gloucester Cathedral—tombs and monuments, chapter house, Lady Chapel, crypt—so that it is not easy to leave. The south door leads into a peaceful close and thence by a narrow lane to Westgate Street, coming out a little below an inn whose sign of the

Fleece hangs on the opposite side of the road. Beneath a great wistaria in the yard of the Fleece, you may go down to the Monks' Retreat, where ale is served in a dim broad-arched vault. Townsfolk, sailormen, farmers, stand in a row and drink their beer in this remarkable bar; whether it has ever been hallowed by consecration, or whether it was once part of an underground passage from the inn to the Cathedral, cannot be told with certainty, but in the wall is a stoup for holy water and the barrels stand under arches of unmistakably ecclesiastical build.

At the bottom of Westgate Street the broken spire of St. Nicholas' rises from a church that is below the level of the road, which gives one to wonder whether the Monks' Retreat has always been underground. The door of St. Nicholas' bears a singular fourteenth-century "knocker" of bronze —a double-headed beast with bat-like wings, holding in one of its mouths a massive ring: this has often been called a "sanctuary knocker," but actually it was, and is, no more than an ornamental handle for closing the heavy door.

Beyond this church the street crosses the main arm of the Severn which comes down from that point near Maisemore—

Where she her stream divides, that with the more delight
She might behold the towne of which she's wondrous proud.

And the Westgate Street bridge recalls that visit of George III. which Thackeray described: "One morning, before anybody else was up, the king walked about Gloucester town; pushed over Molly the housemaid who was scrubbing the doorsteps with her pail; ran upstairs and woke all the equerries in their bedrooms; and then trotted down to the bridge, where, by this time, a dozen of louts were assembled. 'What! is this Gloucester New Bridge?' asked our gracious monarch; and the people answered him, 'Yes, your majesty.' 'Why, then, my boys,' said he, 'let us have a huzzay!' After giving them which intellectual gratification, he went home to breakfast." The shades of his many stern predecessors who had come to Gloucester must have wondered at this new manner of wearing the crown of England.

In Northgate Street is the most interesting secular building in Gloucester, the New Inn. But even this is connected with the Cathedral, having been built in the middle of the fifteenth century by John Twyning, a monk of the abbey who saw the necessity for a hostel to shelter the pilgrims to Edward's shrine. Like all the good old inns, this

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A TEWKESBURY ALLEY.

is entered by a low archway, which leads from the street into a paved courtyard. Beneath the gables round the yard runs a heavy oaken gallery, finely carved, and hung with a profusion of virginia creeper, whence wayfarers for nearly five hundred years have looked down on the bustle below—dusty pilgrims, gay gallants, sea-dogs, men-at-arms, sleepy passengers from the stage-coach—the courtyard of this tavern has staged scenes from all the pageant of history since Plantagenet.

It is but a short distance from the New Inn to where the High Cross used to stand and where Northgate Street, passing the massive, stunted tower of St. Michael's, becomes Southgate Street. This road, too, has an ancient hostelry, built before Hooper was Bishop of Gloucester. But the Bell has been re-faced and has little to show for its great age; Henry Fielding and Smollett both knew and praised it, and George Whitefield was born here in 1714. Thomas Whitefield was landlord of the Bell, and his son confessed that in Gloucester he "made great proficiency in the school of the Devil" before penitence overtook him and he became the finest preacher of the Methodist revival. There will be more to tell of George Whitefield.

Almost opposite the Bell is the elaborately timbered house in which Robert Raikes was born. Raikes is commonly held to be the originator of Sunday Schools, but the idea was not altogether a new one when he developed and popularized it, for there are records of earlier beginnings of Sunday teaching at Dursley, some fifteen miles away. If Southgate Street be followed beyond the ancient limits of Gloucester a cross-road will be reached, leading on the right to the Spa and on the left to the docks—such is the amazing versatility of this city. Beside Cheltenham's waters the chalybeate spring at Gloucester has suffered in popularity, and it is pleasantest to step out from the tiny pump room on to that cricket ground where W. G. and Jessop were at home.

When the stranger hears speak of Gloucester Docks he will, perhaps, check a smile and lay the blame on local pride. Yet this is a flourishing port—the most inland port in Britain—and its wharves carry much merchandise in a year: timber for the match factory, grain and flour, and coal. A canal brings up the bigger boats from Sharpness, and barges may be taken by river and canal as far as Birmingham.

Gloucester is no idle museum. Her shipping

goes up and down on that same river that bore the coracles of the Dobuni; her citizens still walk the Roman streets, worship in the Norman Cathedral, take their ale in medieval inns, and—some of them—live in Tudor houses. And over the city the great tower of the Cathedral reigns, as it has reigned for nearly five hundred years, growing ever more beautiful with the passage of time.

CHAPTER III

THE GLOUCESTER PLAIN

On either side of the Severn, for a distance of six or seven miles round Gloucester, lies a broad plain. This is set about on almost every side with hills that rise steeply, sometimes precipitously, from orchards and green fields To the north stands Tewkesbury, where the vale of Evesham becomes the Gloucester plain, while in the south the Stroudwater streams run into the Severn before the river makes its great horseshoe bend at Newnham and becomes an estuary.

If you would see Gloucester to the best advantage, exquisitely set in the centre of this rich countryside, you should come over the eastern rim of the bowl by way of Birdlip or Cranham. The highroad from Painswick runs along the Cotswold edge to Cranham Woods, and there drops steeply down into the plain. The earlier slopes of the hill are thickly curtained with trees, and beyond this most fitting proscenium lies the view across to Hereford and Worcester.

On a fine day all the valley is filled with a purple haze, pierced by the pinnacled tower of the Cathedral between Robinswood Hill and Wainload Hill, the island of high ground that rises out of the low land beyond Sandhurst. Seen from the Cheltenham road as it enters the valley, the Cathedral stands out above the surrounding country with an inexpressible queenliness, and as the vista unfolds to the traveller between Cranham and the Ermine Street, he must indeed be a dullard, or else preoccupied, if he gives no thought to the creators of this glory of Gloucester, their comprehension, and the great sense of fitness with which they builded.

To the west the plain is walled in by the tumultuous blue chain of Malverns, whose jagged edge tears the skyline in sharp contrast to the smooth brow of the Cotswolds sweeping up from the valley on the east. Beyond Birdlip there is little wood on the face of the hills, Leckhampton is rudely scarred with quarries, and then north of Cheltenham the rampart rises to the bald head of Cleeve Cloud.

The northern boundary of the county is oddly fretted with narrow fingers that reach out to the foot-hills of the Malverns, into Worcester, Warwick, and Oxfordshire. One of the most tenuous of these fingers goes out beyond Tewkesbury and claims for

Gloucestershire a part of Bredon Hill. The summit, with its magnificent view of "the coloured counties," is in Worcestershire, but the sight of the hill itself from Twyning or Kemerton is hardly less beautiful.

But to know the more intimate beauty of the Severn plain you must go down among the meadows, the copses, and the orchards that make it one wide garden. John Drinkwater has sung of "these most beloved of English lands":

> I see the barns and comely manors planned
> By men who somehow moved in comely thought,
> Who, with a simple shippon to their hand,
> As men upon some godlike business wrought;
> I see the little cottages that keep
> Their beauty still where since Plantagenet
> Have come the shepherds happily to sleep,
> Finding the loaves and cups of cider set;
> I see the twisted shepherds, brown and old,
> Driving at dusk their glimmering sheep to fold.

All the roads lead in to Gloucester, and between them is a network of lanes, Gloucestershire lanes, bordered with high hedgerows and many elms. The countryside is richly sprinkled with farmsteads and cottages, and it is rare to find even the smallest home without its surrounding fruit trees —pear, apple, or plum. On the left bank of the

river there are broader and more open tracts of country, where cattle and sheep pasturage is common; but to the west, in that part of the plain watered by the little river Leadon, the tradition of the upper Severn is preserved, and crowded orchards stand close along the river-bank from Maisemore to Westbury. Here and there in this part are solitary oak trees, outposts, as it were, of the Forest of Dean, and chief among these is the great oak at Lassington, of prodigious girth and credited with six hundred years of life.

While Gloucester may be seen best, perhaps, from the Cotswolds, it is very well worth while to come upon the city from the west, for the road from Ross has a somewhat dramatic entry into the basin between May Hill and the Mitcheldean ridge, whence it runs through the fruit and farm lands about Huntley and makes straight for Gloucester. Here again it is the Cathedral that draws to itself all that is best in the view, with its Cotswold background stretching away to be lost to sight in the south.

Since the Ross road has to cross the river, it leads into Gloucester from a lower level than any other approach, and in this way it happens that when you reach the outskirts of the city you may see outlined

against the sky the great tower of the Cathedral. From few other points is it possible to appreciate so fully the consummate grace of the tower and the filigree delicacy of its pinnacles.

The most pleasant road through the plain is that from Gloucester north-east to Dymock. A couple of miles from the city this road passes through Highnam, scene of one of the most severe Royalist defeats during the siege of 1643. A body of the king's Welsh troops were driven out of Highnam by far inferior numbers, and more than five hundred of them were overtaken and slain at Barber's Bridge. An inscribed obelisk serves to remind of the sterner times seen by a countryside now chiefly notable for fine trees and excellent perry.

At Newent the road forks, one branch running on up the valley to Dymock and the other turning east. Along the second way went travellers to Wales, refreshed at the New Inn, from which Newent had its name. Its position on such a vital line of communication gave this town some importance in former days, and the fish-pond of a Benedictine priory still witnesses the existence of Newent at the time of the Norman Conquest. Atkyns, jealous for the honour of his county, reminds his readers that "one Horn was burnt here in the

MAY HILL, FROM THE FOREST OF DEAN.

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reign of Queen Mary, who is not entered among Mr. Foxe's Martyrs."

The valley narrows as it carries the Welsh road between two hills. May Hill on the south is properly called Yartledon, but no one ever speaks of it so. Here on the hill-top the Britons worshipped the fire of Baal, and the Romans the goddess Maia, while the medieval English in their fashion celebrated May Day with country games and a contest between neighbouring parishes for possession of the summit. Nowadays the hill is a landmark by reason of a crowning clump of trees.

Pauntley, on the other side of the valley, has a different distinction. At the end of the fourteenth century the lord of the manor was one Sir William Whittington, whose son Dick, filled with ambitions beyond a Gloucestershire village, set out on that rough and venturesome journey which, with the encouragement of Bow Bells, ended in the thrice-won honour of Lord Mayor of London. Though the fact of his father's knighthood destroys perhaps some of Dick Whittington's legendary appeal, yet the boy and his cat may well have been jaded and poverty-stricken after travelling tediously on foot from the West Country.

To-day Dymock, three miles beyond Newent, is

a typically Herefordshire village, richly planted with orchards and subsisting largely on its fruit produce. But tradition has it that from Dymock came the sheep that Edward IV. gave to King John of Aragon with so fine and thoughtless a generosity that in Spain they multiplied exceedingly and even threatened the supremacy of the English wool trade.

That part of the plain most rich in history lies along the river. The main road from Gloucester to Tewkesbury runs almost straight, through Twigworth and Leigh; the ancient way followed the Severn, keeping east of Wainload Hill. This was probably a track used by the Britons before the Roman builders paved it as a minor road through the lowlands, and probably by this way came Queen Margaret with her sorry following, turned from the unkindly gates of Gloucester to struggle on, wearied and hungry, and take up a last desperate position at Tewkesbury.

Some two miles below Tewkesbury the Worcestershire boundary marches with the river, and in the ancient trackway on the opposite Gloucestershire bank is Deerhurst. You reach Deerhurst by leaving the highroad from Gloucester a mile beyond Coomb Hill and turning down a broad lane towards

Severn. A little distance down the lane there is a bend, and ahead, sharp and white in the sun against the dim blue background of the Malverns, stands the Saxon tower of Deerhurst church. Close by is a Saxon chapel, and together they constitute as large and as well preserved an example of pre-Norman building as may be found in England.

The earliest written record of Deerhurst is a grant of estates to the priory in 804 by Ethelric, son of an Ealdorman of Mercia. Then for two and a half centuries we have no definite knowledge of the welfare of the house, save that it must have suffered at the hands of the Danes, "the heathen men" who ruthlessly harried and plundered all the countryside. Leland took this as authentic history: "Bede maketh mention that in his time there was a notable abbey at Deirhurst. It was destroyed by the Danes. The old priory stoode est from the Severne a bowe shotte and north of the towne."

The priory was evidently active in the tenth century, since one of its monks was Alphege, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, whose name is in the calendar of saints of the English Church. In the time of Edward I. Deerhurst was apparently prospering, for the Confessor, with his characteristic Norman singleness of heart, made over the whole

estate to the abbey of St. Denis at Paris. William the Conqueror confirmed this alienation, candidly stating in his charter that he made the gift "in the hope of eternal reward, and to the end that we and our offspring, by the prayers of the said Saint Dionysius, may be entitled to enjoy prosperity here on earth and secure an eternal mansion hereafter."

Edward the Confessor was frequently at Gloucester, and there can be little doubt that he visited Deerhurst and saw for himself the fatness of the country round about. Not content with bestowing the priory abroad, he took for himself the manor of Deerhurst and gave it to his new monastery of St. Peter at Westminster. The manorial estates comprised a great deal of the terrain between Deerhurst, Gloucester and Cheltenham—a welcome present for the potential Westminster Abbey. Thus it came about that this one king, whom the Church of his time had material reason to regard as a saint, divided the lay and ecclesiastical lands of Deerhurst between the two great abbeys which are the chief burial-places of the kings of their respective countries.

For nearly four hundred years the priory paid its revenue into the treasury of St. Denis, but Henry VI. put a drastic end to such an unsatisfactory

TEWKESBURY ABBEY.

state of affairs by dividing the estate and its income between the establishments of Eton and Tewkesbury. The latter abbey enjoyed its holding on the condition that it supplied Deerhurst with four monks who should pray for the king and his beloved wife Elizabeth. So for the second time the priory was made part of a bargain for the peace and safety of a monarch's soul through all eternity. With this division the local independence of Deerhurst departed, and hereafter it was little more than a chapel attached to Tewkesbury Abbey.

All that now remains of Deerhurst Priory is its church, but this can still show enough of the original Saxon fabric to be one of the first places of pilgrimage for archæologists. It stands a little aloof from the hamlet, to which you must go to buy the privilege of entering God's house.

The lower part of the tower is the work of Saxon builders, irregular stonework with wide uneven joints, and here and there are strips of herring-bone masonry that catch the eye by reason of their contrast and haphazard placing. Formerly the nave stood alone, high and narrow, but now aisles on either side soften its severity, even if they take something from its gaunt dignity.

Inside the building the west wall, formed by the eastern part of the Saxon tower, is striking to the eye of the least archæological observer. High in the wall, close beneath the roof, are twin windows, famous for the rarity of their type. They are of quaint pyramidal shape, having sharp angular heads supported on squat columns. To anyone with the slightest sense of atmosphere, these windows appear strangely out of place and foreign to the church; their presence in such a building is inexplicable. Lower down in the same wall are two separate windows whose irregular position is part of the same mystery. The font is witness to two fortunate finds, for its bowl was discovered in a nearby farmyard and its stem or pedestal in a garden; the whole is lavishly decorated with spiral and interwoven-ribbon designs, such as are found in early Irish illuminated manuscripts.

Of the three brasses in the church the most interesting, and fortunately the best preserved, is that of Sir John Cassey, who was Chief Baron of the Exchequer before his death in the year 1400. He lies with Dame Alice, his wife, beneath whose feet is a dog. The name of Mistress Cassey's dog occurs in the inscription on the tomb, and it is pleasant to think that the good lady died

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in the belief that Tirri would disport himself with her husband and herself upon the Elysian fields.

At a little distance from the churchyard is a finely timbered farmhouse built, so it was discovered at the latter end of the last century, on to the chancel of a Saxon chapel. This discovery was at once connected with an inscribed stone found in a neighbouring orchard many years before, now to be seen in the Ashmolean at Oxford; the inscription, translated from the Latin, announces that Earl Odda had the royal hall built for the good of his brother Elfric's soul, which in this place quitted the body in the fourteenth year of the reign of Edward, King of the English. Signs of a great fireplace lead one to suspect that the chapel has been put to other and less devotional uses since the lord of the manor raised it in brotherly piety in 1056.

There is still a splendid simplicity about Deerhurst, and an odour of sanctity, and in summer the sweet scent of blossoming limes. It is worth the trouble to walk across a meadow to the river, "a bowe shotte" from the church. Here the Severn is a placid stream between hedges of withy and rush, probably much as it was when Alphege and

his brother monks came down to catch their Friday fish.

A loop of the river in former times created a small island hereabouts, known as the island of Olney. Saxon chronicles record that, after the battle of Assandun in 1016, Edmund Ironside and Canute came to Deerhurst and there made peace, dividing the kingdom between them. Roger of Wendover, writing at a later date, mentions a personal encounter between the two kings on a little island called Olney in the Severn. Just above Gloucester there is also an island of Alney —both mean "isle of alders"—but this is a broad tract of land and unlikely to have been the scene of the reported fight. If the two kings actually did fight hand to hand, like the ancient heroes of Homer, there was presumably no decision, for the treaty was made on equal terms. In the same year Edward died and Canute became king of all the English.

The Anglo-Saxon word *deor*, from which Deerhurst gets its name, means "a wild beast," and this may have something to do with a strange tale served up by Sir Robert Atkyns, who was at least anxious that the village should justify its name.

" There goes a story that a serpent of prodigious bigness was a great grievance to all the country about Deerhurst, by poisoning the inhabitants and killing their cattle. The inhabitants petitioned the king, and a proclamation was issued out that whosoever should kill the serpent should enjoy an estate on Walton Hill in this parish, which then belonged to the Crown. One John Smith, a labourer, undertook it and succeeded ; for finding the serpent lying in the sun, with his scales ruffled up, he struck between the scales with his axe, and struck off his head. The family of Smiths enjoy the estate at present."

Rudder, sixty years later, obviously doubted the existence of this worthy upholder of the tradition of St. George. Warning his readers that the marvellous and wonderful are to be admitted to history with caution, he excuses the repetition of the story on account of his finding it in Sir Robert Atkyns. But in those sixty years the tale had grown, as is the way with local legends, unless Samuel Rudder fell to the temptation of trying to improve upon it. He describes the cunning which Smith employed to make sure of the estate on Walton Hill :

" Having put a quantity of milk in a place to

which the serpent resorted, he gorged the whole, agreeable to expectation, and lay down in the sun, with his scales ruffled up. Seeing him in that situation, Smith advanced and took off his head."

Atkyns told the better tale.

From Deerhurst it is natural to go on to Tewkesbury, not only because it is next along the road from Gloucester, but also because the splendour and nobility of this ancient town is all the more magnificent after Deerhurst's Saxon simplicity. By this approach there is no distant view of Tewkesbury ; the road dips, and at the top of the rise the unwary traveller finds himself suddenly before the great west end of the Abbey.

There can be few towns that still hold so much of the Elizabethan atmosphere. To come into Tewkesbury late at night, when the inharmonies of modern life have died away, is to enter a street of overhanging timbered houses and shadowy alleys, a street in which it would be little surprise to meet citizens in trunk hose and doublet, starched ruff and lace of Flanders. For there is still a Tudor gallantry about the town.

The Tewkesbury streets form a Y, Church Street being the stem, High Street and Barton Street

branching off to left and right at the Cross. In all three there is an unmatched wealth of Elizabethan domestic architecture ; half-timbered and gabled, the ancient houses stand cheek by jowl, not pampered curiosities, but dwelling-places and shops fulfilling the needs that they were built to meet. The reality of life in bygone England is intensified by crooked courts and alleys that lead off from the road on every hand, giving through their entries delightful glimpses of leaning side-walls richly timbered, quaint irregular cottages, with sometimes an angle of the tower of St. Mary's Abbey or a sight of meadows beyond.

Where Church Street widens at the Cross there are on the right two fifteenth-century houses together, one with a great single gable, the second twin-gabled and more closely timbered. Both maintain the traditions of their time, for at the first the townsfolk buy their ham and bacon, while the second bravely sells good ale—albeit not the liquor known to ruffling gallants in the merry days. The cross-beam supporting the upper rooms of the inn bends at its centre with the weight of years ; next door the ham shop bears itself firm and straight, and this is well, because immediately above the shop-front is a row of little windows

with exquisitely carved frames to hold their leaded lights.

On the other side of the road a hotel has its fame, not from the picturesque, but because it was chosen by Charles Dickens as a stopping-place for Mr. Pickwick and party on their hilarious coach journey from Bristol to Birmingham. Earlier in the day they had lunched on Berkeley Heath, reaching Tewkesbury in time for dinner:

"At the Hop Pole at Tewkesbury, they stopped to dine; upon which occasion there was more bottled ale, with some more Madeira, and some Port besides; and here the case-bottle was replenished for the fourth time. Under the influence of these combined stimulants, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Ben Allen fell fast asleep for thirty miles, while Bob and Mr. Weller sang duets in the dickey."

In High Street is one of the most perfect specimens of its period that may be found anywhere. Now somewhat pretentiously titled "The House of the Golden Key," this was once the coaching office. Each of its upper storeys stands forward from the one beneath, until at the top two gables, twisted and warped, lean out grotesquely as if to peer into the street below. The whole of this

thoroughfare, on either side, from the Tolzey to the old Black Bear with its fearsome claws, is rich in similar buildings. Indeed, of all the Tewkesbury houses, their history, their timber work, their mullions, carvings, and emblazoned arms, as many books might well be written.

At the top of High Street the Mythe road bears to the left and at once crosses the Avon by King John's Bridge. The low arches of the ancient bridge are of weather-beaten stone and mellowed brick pleasantly mingled, and its piers thrust out their lichened walls into the stream on either side. Shakespeare himself must have stood often on this bridge and watched his river flow on its leisurely way to wed with Severn. Perhaps it was here that he ruminated on the excellence of the mustard made at Tewkesbury ; for Falstaff, surely a famous eater of beef among his fellows, complains that the wit of Poins is as thick as Tewkesbury mustard.

Such are the more intimate characteristics of the town. But Tewkesbury has a wider renown on account of her beautiful abbey church, as scene of a decisive battle in the Wars of the Roses, and latterly as the boyhood home of Mrs. Craik's John Halifax.

The house of the fourteen windows, opposite

which John first met Abel and Phineas Fletcher, and where he had his first vision of Ursula March, is in the High Street of "Norton Bury." The Fletchers' home, now an inn, is at the bottom of Church Street, and hard by on the river stands the old mill. The earlier chapters of the story are crowded with faithful pictures of the surroundings in which the young apprenticed tanner grew, in accordance with his ideal, to be a Christian gentleman.

The tower of Tewkesbury Abbey impresses by the grandeur of its solid Norman simplicity. At Gloucester the Cathedral tower has an almost ethereal loveliness; at Tewkesbury there is a friendly comeliness, enhanced by warm, comforting tints in the stone. The upper stages are decorated in the Norman way with fine windows, graceful blind arches and chevron moulding. Originally there was a wooden spire, but in the middle of the sixteenth century this fell down and the splendid base was crowned with idle, unworthy battlements and four ridiculous pinnacles. Even so, the character of the Norman building triumphs over its desecration.

It is not easy to get a good view of the east end of the Abbey from without. There is no longer a

Lady Chapel, but the choir is supported by splendid flying buttresses, and about it are grouped the chapels of Tewkesbury's illustrious dead. The west front, perhaps the grandest feature of the whole, is among the first memorials of the Norman builders in all England. It consists of one huge arch, recessed in six stages so cunningly that the beholder feels involuntarily drawn towards the interior of the nave itself. High on either side, the west front is flanked by pinnacled turrets, as appropriate as those on the tower are incongruous. There is a lack of continuity and rhythm between the west end and the tower, and one is at a loss to account for this until on the lower storey of the tower is noticed the outline of a high-pitched roof. With a loftier nave, the building must have been perfect in its harmony.

It is an aspect of our advancing civilization that there are many, perhaps an increasing number, to whom the very name of history is tiresome. If any such may have read as far as this, let him skip shamelessly to the end of the chapter.

The earliest record of Tewkesbury, and one from which some have derived the town's name, is that Theocus, an eminent hermit, dwelt in this place about the year 700 and had a chapel on the banks

of the Severn. A more reliable source has it that two Dukes of Mercia, Oddo and Doddo, built a monastery at Tewkesbury in 715, and that here a hundred years later Brithric, king of the West Saxons, was laid to his last rest.

In the year 1000, as a holy chronicler writes so perfectly, "Christendom started from its sleep of death and put on its white robe of churches," a triumphant passage inspired by such men as that cousin of William I. to whom the Conqueror gave the monastery at Tewkesbury. A notice in the porch tells how the Abbey was built through the munificence of Fitzhamon, kinsman of William the Conqueror; and it goes on to speak with a just pride of the despoiling by Henry VIII. in 1541 and of the people of Tewkesbury who paid the king £453 and saved their church. That was a heavy sum for the townsmen of those days, but they were noble spenders, amply rewarded for their pious denial by the most magnificent of parish churches.

To stand inside the nave is to compare it at once with that at Gloucester, for here the same stout Norman pillars give an impression of confident strength. But the columns of Tewkesbury are not so massive; they are taller, and above them are

less ponderous arches springing up to a beautifully vaulted roof.

In the chantries and tombs gathered round the choir there is greatest interest. If the Despencers and Beauchamps knew what craftsmanship was to be wrought in the beauty of their tombs, such knowledge must surely have tempered the pains of death for them. The wife of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Worcester, in life may have loved her husband truly; in death she certainly did, for the tiny chapel she caused to be built about his tomb is a thing of inexpressible beauty, delicately carved, and covered with an exquisite canopy on slender pillars. Once it was fittingly painted in all the blues and reds and golds of heraldry—but Puritan eyes were offended.

In the eastern arch of the same north side of the choir lie in alabaster Hugh Despencer and his lady Elizabeth, beneath a stately canopy most delicately fashioned, and over against this tomb is the effigy in armour of Sir Guy de Brien, who carried the king's standard at Crecy. The dust of chivalry lies thick in Tewkesbury.

In a vault at the east end of the choir are the remains of Edward IV.'s brother and his wife, the Kingmaker's daughter. This is that same Duke of

Clarence who is fondly remembered for his fatal misadventure with a butt of Malmsey wine; better that such a legend should live than the truth of the king's fratricide. Close by stands the ghoulish memorial of Wakeman, last Abbot of Tewkesbury. All manner of repulsive vermin prey upon the decaying body partly shrouded in graveclothes, and, as if this were not enough, the corpse is vilely scarred with the initials of those who have seen fit to place on record their own names in company with the desecrating worms. Delicate stonework above is a healthy and refreshing contrast, for the canopy is that which was copied in the throne of the House of Lords.

The eastern end of the south transept is used as a chapel, with a glittering Venetian mosaic over the altar. Here is hung a copy of one of Raphael's great number of Madonnas, the *del Passegio.* The Abbey, trusting in the signature "Raffele," has claimed the picture as Raphael's own, but of this particular work there are no versions extant actually by the master's hand.* Our Lady stands in the grace of motherhood, St. John the Baptist and her Son with her, while St. Joseph, the peasant farmer, leaves them reluctantly to turn

* H. Knackfuss: *Raphael.*

down the pathway that gives the picture its name.

In this same chapel is a tablet to the memory of Mrs. Craik, bearing the sufficient inscription, "She wrote John Halifax, Gentleman," and beneath it John's last words as he died in the sunset on Enderley: "Each in his place is fulfilling his day, and passing away (just as that sun is passing). Only we know not whither he passes; while whither we go we know, and the Way we know—the same yesterday, to-day and for ever." An epitome of his philosophy.

A brass in the floor beneath the tower commemorates Prince Edward, head of the House of Lancaster, whose body is buried somewhere in the Abbey. It remains to tell the story of the battle in the Tewkesbury meadows by which he lost his life.

On Easter Day, 1471, a decisive Yorkist victory at Barnet marked the beginning of the end of a bitter civil struggle that had then been going on for sixteen years. Warwick and all the leaders of the Lancastrian hope were killed at Barnet, and it seemed that Edward IV. and his Yorkist supporters would be secure from further serious opposition. But they reckoned without Henry VI.'s widow,

Queen Margaret, and his son Edward, legitimately King of England. On the very day of the death of Warwick, mainstay and support of the young prince's claim, Margaret and her son returned to England from France.

She made such a successful rally at Exeter that Edward IV. was forced to give all his energy and resources to a final extinction of the Lancastrian cause. Queen Margaret and her army made for the north, but by the time they reached Bath the king was outflanking them at Cirencester. On May 2, therefore, the Lancastrian army pushed on with the idea of crossing the Severn at Gloucester. A hasty message from the Yorkist camp at Sodbury to the Constable of Gloucester was quicker than the queen, and after a forced march up the valley she found the gates of the city shut against her.

Disappointed, worn out, and apprehensive, the Lancastrians turned wearily aside from Gloucester and struggled on beside the river. At Tewkesbury they could go no further, and resolved "to abyde there th'aventure that God would send them, in a fielde even at the towne's end," as is chronicled by a servant of King Edward who was present at the battle next day, "the towne and the Abbey at

KING JOHN'S BRIDGE, TEWKESBURY.

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theyr backs, afore them and on every hand of them fowle lanes and deep dikes, and many hedges, with hylls and valleys, a ryght evill place to approche, as cowlde well have been devysed." That was on the night of May 3, 1471.

Meantime the young king had been demonstrating his considerable military genius at the head of the Yorkist army, marching almost abreast of Margaret, but across the open "champain contrye" of the Cotswolds, while the enemy toiled through the tangled lanes in the valley below. On the evening of May 3, King Edward passed through "a village callyd Chiltenham" and pitched his camp within three miles of Tewkesbury.

Queen Margaret's position was between the Swilgate Brook and what is now the road to Gloucester, in a great field known as the Gastons outside the walls of the town. In spite of being driven to bay in a state of great fatigue, the Lancastrians were apparently confident of the issue; they prepared formidable entrenchments and laid a careful plan of battle. Somerset led the van, the young Prince Edward was in the centre, and over the rearguard and reserve Courtenay, Earl of Devon, held command.

Fighting began at dawn, and at once it became

evident that King Edward held a very great advantage in his superior number of cannon. As it turned out, the fortunes of the day were decided by artillery and particularly by a body of Germans who, with their new hand-guns, did great execution for the Yorkist cause.

At the first reverse Somerset lost his temper and consequently the battle. Furious at an imagined lack of support by Wenlock, he rode up to that unfortunate lord and with a battle-axe battered the life out of him. Nothing could be more dispiriting to the Lancastrian men of the line than to see their leaders thus openly and emphatically divided among themselves. Their ranks were immediately disorganized, and such as were not cut down where they stood fled incontinent for refuge in the town and Abbey. On the right of the Lancastrian position a fearful slaughter was done. You may walk to-day down a lane from the Gloucester road to this spot ; it is now a narrow field with a watercourse along the centre, and for four hundred and fifty years it has gone by the name of Bloody Meadow. Here were more than seven hundred of the flower of Lancaster slain.

For long it was thought that Margaret's son was taken and cruelly murdered by the victors. The

story went that King Edward received the prisoner and demanded "how he dared so presumptuouslie enter his realms with banner displaied"; at the boy's princely reply that he came to recover his father's kingdom and heritage, Clarence and Gloucester were alleged to have drawn their swords and despatched him forthwith.

A contemporary chronicler, however, has it that Prince Edward was "taken fleinge to the towne wards and slaine in the fielde." This version is not so much to the credit of the prince, but it leaves one stain the less on the white rose of York.

Immediately after the battle the king freely gave his prisoners their lives "at the reverence of the blessyd Trinitie, the moste holy vyrgyn Mary, and the holy martir Seint George by whos grace and helpe he had that day atteygned so noble a victory." Yet two days later a scaffold was set up at the Tolsey, and there King Edward caused to be beheaded many baronets, knights, and esquires. So much for the honour and faith of the crown of England.

The proud Margaret of Anjou surrendered three days later. It is uncertain where she spent the night of the battle, but some have it that Thomas Payne and his good wife Ursula gave her

refuge at Bushley across the river in Worcestershire.

So the last real hope of the Lancastrian house was lost in Tewkesbury meadows, and Edward IV. ruled as undisputed king of England for the remaining twelve years of his life.

It is worth the toil to climb on to the Abbey tower and look out over the Gloucester plain. If day and time be well chosen, the whole vale will be hung with a purple and golden haze, threaded by the silver ribbon of Severn. Away beyond rise the mountains of Wales and the Malvern Hills, and it is often hard to tell where they meet the sky.

Close to Tewkesbury lies the pattern of green fields, and down in the hollow that meadow where the red rose took on a deeper hue and where you may hear the wind from the river on a winter's night as if Margaret were moaning for her son, while about the foot of the tower twist the old streets and alleys of the town, echoing at every corner the

> Old, unhappy, far-off things,
> And battles long ago.

THE PROMENADE, CHELTENHAM.

CHAPTER IV

CHELTENHAM

In an eastern corner of the Gloucester plain lies Cheltenham with its villages, partly of the hills but chiefly of the valley, having the pleasantness of the lowland and none of the sharp winds that often scourge the wolds.

Two hundred years ago Cheltenham was a struggling hamlet of poor thatched cottages, though even then it was a long-established settlement. William's Commissioners of Domesday reported that Edward the Confessor held the manor, that it boasted three plough teams, paid an annual rent of £9 5s. 0d., and each year provided three thousand loaves for the king's dogs. Those were the great days of hunting, when the royal pack fed on Cheltenham bread.

There were weavers in the hamlet at the end of the thirteenth century ; women and children of the poorer sort combed and spun woollen yarn for the clothiers about Stroud, "near which town, upon

the hills of Cotswold, the fleeces are superlatively good." This was before men learnt that the fleeces were in truth golden; an outdoor life was the only thing for an Englishman, and the weavers were despised as poor churls "who knew not how to bear arms in knightly wise." When the industry was set on foot in earnest at the arrival of the Brabanters under Edward III., Cheltenham had little part in the new-found wealth.

In 1675 there passed through Gloucestershire a gentleman of undoubted versatility, one John Ogilby, who combined in his illustrious person the offices of His Majesty's Cosmographer and Master of His Majesty's Revels in the Kingdom of Ireland. Ogilby remarks that at Cheltenham "the people are much given to plant Tobacco, though they are suppress by authority"—a reproof to be laid at the door of the local Elizabethans. Raleigh was several times a visitor in the county, and his captains must have had friends in Gloucestershire; moreover, it is likely that there was more than one Severn dalesman among his crews, so the early introduction of the sweet weed from Virginia is not a matter for mystery.

The suppression of tobacco-growing came about in this way. Cromwell the Protector received

from a number of merchants in the New England colonies a complaint concerning the damage done to the plantations, the maritime commerce, and the revenue by the great and increasing quantity of tobacco grown in England. Reflecting the principle of imperial preference in a most advanced form, an Act was at once passed to prohibit the planting of tobacco in England, "which materially affected the interests of many persons in Gloucestershire."

The persons most materially affected were Cheltenham and Winchcombe farmers. These did not intend that their livelihood should be sacrificed for the vaguely remote advantage of colonial prosperity, and so they humbly approached Parliament. "Your petitioners have for many years past grown in ye common fields ye weed called Tobacco, and pray that your Highnesse and Parliament will permitt them by your Council to practice the same, as their crops will be perilled and lost, and it will be to the ruin of very many labourers. . . . Your obedient servants, and all the countries round about, shall accordingly pray for your Highnesse and Parliament." So pathetic an appeal might have stirred pity in many men, but stern Oliver was not to be won over by the promise of a few country fellows'

prayers, and the Act stood. Cotswold men, however, have never lacked spirit when local liberties were in the scale. They went on planting with a fine disregard for the laws of the realm, and when a troop of horse rode over from Gloucester, grim Puritans out to exterminate an idle luxury, the countryside set so sharp a face against them that they drew off discomfited. And so His Majesty's Cosmographer and Master of His Majesty's Revels in the Kingdom of Ireland found the people of Cheltenham still flouting the Crown.

The children of these early tobacco-growers had an excellent grammar school at Cheltenham, founded by one of Elizabeth's courtiers, Richard Pate of Minsterworth, and richly endowed from the royal treasury. The rules that Pate laid down for the governance of his school may still be read. He was careful to direct that all the books were to be tied fast by little chains in some convenient place, and he gave the master power to demand a payment of eightpence from any boy who did not return to the school within fourteen days of the declaration that it was free of the plague.

The grammar school was visited annually by an examiner from Corpus Christi College, Oxford, on whose report were awarded prizes provided by the

founder's munificence. The most learned and virtuous youth received "a pen of silver, wholly gilt, of the price of 2s. 6d.," from which may be estimated the severity of the penalty inflicted on such as made the pestilence an excuse for prolonged holidays. The best scholars in three lower forms were rewarded with a quire of paper, at fourpence the quire. After the annual examination the whole establishment went in procession to church, "the four victors coming last, each of them having a laurel garland on his head, provided for that purpose, and the other three rewarded scholars together in one rank, each of them holding his quire of paper rolled up in his right hand." Through this window giving on the life of Elizabethan England the dawn of organized education may be seen, ushered in with fit and dignified pageantry.

In all probability Cheltenham would have remained but a prosperous village to this day, were it not for the fortunate happenings of 1716. It was in that year of grace that a Mr. Mason, whose name should surely be honoured for all time in Cheltenham, noticed that flocks of pigeons came daily to feed about a spring that rose in one of his fields. He found that the birds were tempted by particles of salt deposited by the spring, that they

were in fact the first to take the Cheltenham waters. As every true Roman reverenced the goose as saviour of his city, so may the Cheltonian honour the pigeon that rescued his town from the mediocrity of a country village.

An old county history has another theory, claiming that the virtues of the water were first shown by a horse that grazed in Mr. Mason's field, and by drinking at the spring and rolling in the grass was cured of a violent humour and other disorders under which he laboured.

For twenty years little advantage was made of the momentous discovery. Then the first pump room was built, a paved court laid out, and shady walks devised to attract and increase the number of persons who wished to take the cure. Close at hand was Bath in the heyday of its fashion, an example from which Cheltenham, lacking the advantages of antiquity, could learn much that was necessary to a flourishing inland spa.

The first half of the eighteenth century was notable for a deluge of pamphlets from writers with varying pretensions to medical knowledge, all of whom set forth the benefits to be obtained from the Cheltenham waters, and supported their arguments with detailed accounts of such experiments

as mixing the water with tincture of galls and with syrup of violets. It is believed that all these reports were disinterested; one of them states that the waters lose their chalybeate properties within a few hours, even when secured in a bottle by the closest corking, and therefore the drinking must be made at the well itself. There was apparently no limit to the powers of healing—all the chief internal disorders, inflammation in any part, and weak eyes.

In 1788 the fortunes of Cheltenham were assured by the royal physicians who, searching desperately for some new treatment for their appalling charge, advised George III. to visit the new watering-place for his health. So the king, with Charlotte his wife and his daughters, came down by coach to the West Country. According to the manner of the time, the royal household was attended by a great and fashionable court; all who strove to be considered of the English aristocracy flocked about the royal person, and a whole Vanity Fair of vicious pleasure-seekers was transported from London to Cheltenham, to take its fill of folly and cold water, and to be with the pathetic caricature of manhood that passed for King of Britain, by the grace of God.

One can imagine how the town was set at the

ears by the news of the royal visit, how there were excited preparations for the junketings attendant on a royal progress; the little shops hastily stocked from Town; milady must not lack her perfumes and her patches; milord must have his fine brocades, his snuff, and the wherewithal to be in liquor nightly, as befits a gallant English gentleman; the number of sedan chairs, with their fixed hire of sixpence, must be great enough to carry the nobility; additional post-chaises must be put on the road to Frogmill to meet the coach from the Bolt and Tun, Fleet Street, and the diligence from the Swan with Two Necks in Lad Lane; the theatre must be prepared for the divine Sarah, and my Lord Fauconberg must make ready his mansion to lodge His Majesty's household.

The king arrived at Cheltenham on July 12, and stayed for twelve days, returning for a further week after visits to Gloucester and Worcester. He rose each morning at six o'clock, and took the waters zealously. The court liked these early hours little enough, but everyone of consequence felt himself bound to drink with the king, and there could be few who were not the better for a clean draught at sunrise after the routs and riotous gaiety of the night before. Mrs. Siddons played at the theatre

LOWER SLAUGHTER.

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and read Shakespeare to the king in the town where she was first discovered, performing at a coffee-house, by a friend of Garrick ; Kemble, too, came down to Cheltenham. In those days the little river Chelt, on its way from the Cotswolds to the Severn, ran uncovered in the streets, and was crossed by stepping-stones.

It was when Cheltenham was reaching the height of its fashion that John Halifax and Phineas Fletcher made their venturesome and fateful pilgrimage from Tewkesbury to see the queen of tragedy. Phineas was too tired, and John too anxious, to see much of the town that both knew was regarded with good reason by the old Quaker tanner as an abode of sin, but once in the barn-like theatre their uneasy fears were forgotten in the scenes around them, and soon every feeling but breathless admiration was swept aside by the Lady Macbeth of Mrs. Siddons.

" Before the curtain rose we had time to glance about us on that scene, to both entirely new—the inside of a theatre. Shabby and small as the place was, it was filled with all the *beau monde* of Coltham, which then, patronized by royalty, rivalled even Bath in its fashion and folly. Such a dazzle of diamonds and spangled turbans and Prince-of-

Wales' plumes. Such an odd mingling of costume, which was then in a transition state, the old ladies clinging tenaciously to the stately silken petticoats and long bodices, surmounted by the prim and decent *bouffantes*, while the younger belles had begun to flaunt in the French fashions of flimsy muslins, short-waisted, narrow-skirted."

George III.'s example was followed faithfully, and Cheltenham took the place of Bath as the first English spa. From Bath came an experienced master of ceremonies, Simeon Moreau, to fill the office of *arbiter elegantarium* at Cheltenham. He presided over the balls, struck medals on notable occasions, arranged official programmes, encouraged the medical pamphleteers, and himself published "A Tour to Cheltenham." To record the number of eminent visitors under Moreau's régime is merely to set down the names of most who were distinguished in the state, the arts, and the services. Wellington came to Cheltenham several times, once with Blücher, and there was almost always one member or another of the exiled French royal family in the town or neighbourhood.

During the first fifty years of the last century Cheltenham was often a nest of singing birds; Sir Walter Scott came to see his relations, Lord Byron

lived for a time in the High Street and there wrote part of *The Corsair*, Thackeray came to observe the life he could so well describe, Tennyson sought refuge from his grief at Hallam's death in the house of his widowed mother, and a host of lesser songsters found sympathy and inspiration in the town. How much of *In Memoriam* was written at Cheltenham is uncertain, but much of it must have been conceived during walks in the neighbourhood, of which the poet wrote to a friend that it was one of the prettiest countries in Great Britain. Mrs. Tennyson lived in St. James's Square, and it was here that her son spent the year before he became Poet Laureate. A welcome light falls on the nature of the great sorrowful Victorian from the story of how he was never tired of conversing with an unusually intellectual parrot belonging to a porter at the station across the square.

At Cheltenham Tennyson met Sydney Dobell, who kept the books of his father's firm—the Dobells' wine business still thrives in the centre of the town—until he married Emily Fordham, and forsook figures for poetry. This poet's health was as delicate as his strangely neglected verse, and his body gave over too soon the support of burning enthusiasms and a more than mortal tenderness.

He lived his last days near Nailsworth, and he lies buried at Painswick, in the countryside that a king of England called Paradise, and that any man might know for the true Valhalla of such spirits.

A little later another and a greater poet was bred at Cheltenham. James Elroy Flecker was a son of the first headmaster of the Dean Close School; his early manhood was spent at Cambridge and at Oxford, then the Consular Service took him to the Near East, and early in the Great War he died of consumption. In his youth, and during the long university vacations, Flecker would roam the land he was proud to love, Cranham and Birdlip, Painswick and the valleys, impatient of his unseeing friends. This was the countryside that came back into his mind as he climbed the barren hills of Greece to remember the

> Autumn leaves like blood and gold
> That strew a Gloucester lane.

Even one who had never seen the town, but who had read the names and writings of these men, might guess that there is beauty and grace in Cheltenham. And he would be right. The descriptions "garden-city" and "garden-town" have been betrayed so often and so brazenly by estate agents and railway companies that they

cannot now be used for such a town as Cheltenham. The very thought of "promenade," too, brings with it in these days a suggestion of brass bands and noisy crowds.

The character of Cheltenham may be read in its Promenade. This is a broad road bordered with trees—not the poor growths commonly seen in towns, hedged about with railings, like creatures in a strange country or frightened song-birds in a cage—but lusty timber, rather of the forest than the park. In summer-time great branches meet together overhead, and the sunlight through their leaves dapples the roadway from side to side.

Flanking the gently sloping road on one side are colourful flower beds, and under an ancient weeping willow in the midst of these, Neptune presides over an unusually beautiful fountain. The dignity of its shops, a refreshing lack of civic ostentation, and a tacit recognition of Nature's supremacy as architect and artist—these make the Promenade a true pleasaunce and an epitome of Cheltenham itself.

But for its essential Englishness one would be ready to compare Cheltenham with the foreign spas. Those who know Baden-Baden, for example, will remember how that town clings to the skirts

of the Schwarzwald much as Cheltenham nestles against the Cotswolds. But there is something forbidding about the heavily wooded slopes of the Black Forest, and something pompous in the German watering-place that is alien to the softness and intimate friendliness of this corner of Gloucestershire. At Baden, too, it is difficult to forget that everything has a definite material purpose; the vast hotels, the *kurhaus*, the people themselves, are in conscious triumph at the harnessing and domination of Nature.

Of the medicinal qualities of the four Cheltenham waters, of its pump rooms, its parks and monuments, of its schools and churches, its recreations and amusements, and of its numerous incidental attractions, this is not the place to read. There is an excellent guide-book.

Several delightful villages cluster round Cheltenham, particularly under the hills, and one or two of them have become suburbs of the town that a couple of hundred years ago was as they are now. To the north, Bishop's Cleeve lies under the shadow of the great escarpment that rears its bare head above wooded slopes, the highest point in the whole Cotswold range, well named Cleeve Cloud. From the common land that crowns this hill you

may look down upon the Gloucester plain and see it as the birds see it. Between the outlying island hills, Churchdown and Wainload, Gloucester is set against the forest upland of Dean, a shadowy blue background; further north, Tewkesbury stands out against a swell in the even plain, and all the land between is rich in farmsteads, clustered elms and high hedges, and wandering lanes like ribbons flung carelessly over an exquisite patchwork of orchards and sweetly disordered meadows. Beyond is the jagged barrier of the Welsh mountains, and away in the south the Cotswold bastions, point beyond point, stand out into the vale. A man might travel through all England and oversea and never please his eyes so well. Tennyson must have walked on Cleeve Cloud:

> Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
> And on these dews that drench the furze,
> And all the silver gossamers
> That twinkle into green and gold.
>
> Calm and still light on yon great plain,
> That sweeps with all its Autumn bowers,
> And crowded farms and lessening towers,
> To mingle with the bounding main.

Nearer Cheltenham is Prestbury, which once had a saline spring, but preferred to remain a village.

In the medieval Rolls of Parliament it is recorded that one Robert of Prestbury seized all the lands and chattels of his neighbour Henry of Up Hatherley when the latter was a prisoner in Scotland; at Henry's return the man of Prestbury calmly invented a charge of theft against his victim, and raised the hue and cry on him. "They beat the said Henry of Upatherle in the town of Gloucester, that is, they bruised his two arms, both his thighs and both his legs, and his head on both sides, and quite wrecked and vilely treated his body." Against this assault on her husband's honour and person, Alisot his wife appears to have pleaded with the king. From Edward II. she had scant comfort: "If the husband be alive, the plaint is his; if he be dead, the wife's plaint is nothing." Ugly history for this smiling countryside.

Opposite Cleeve Cloud, Leckhampton Hill watches over Cheltenham and the valley. Its brow is ridged with the ramparts of an early British camp, a magnificent outpost, and just below the summit a grotesque column of weathered rock stands out sharply from the steep slope. This is the Devil's Chimney. Such contrariness to Nature was readily set to the Devil's credit by simpler folk in earlier times, and they were a good deal nearer

BOURTON-ON THE WATER.

the truth than superior Simeon Moreau, who laughed at the legend and easily explained the Chimney as doubtless the work of some shepherds anxious to while away an idle hour!

Between Leckhampton Hill and Birdlip is a small grassy knoll, called Cooper's Hill, very steep. Here still flourishes one of the last meetings for the country games that pleasured Cotswold youths in the spacious days. Every year at Whitsuntide several thousands of people come across the hills and up from the valley for the Wake. As long as most folk can remember the Master of the Wake has been Farmer Brooks, a woldsman from the ribbons in his broad-brimmed hat to the hem of his billowy smock. The chief business is the rolling of cheeses; pell-mell down the precipitous slope of Cooper's Hill hurtle the competitors, each risking his limbs to capture the bounding cheese and crash with it into the hedge at the bottom. After the cheese bowling there are races on the top of the hill, for girls and women as well as for men and boys. How the heart of Master Robert Dover must rejoice if he chances to lean out from the bar of Heaven and watch them.

Charlton Kings is now almost a part of Cheltenham, but it still preserves its individuality and is

perhaps the prettiest of all the satellite villages. Here Sydney Dobell lived, and Dinah Mulock did much of her work. From Charlton the railway and the road go up by the great reservoirs into another world, and it will be well to follow them.

CHAPTER V

THE NORTH COTSWOLDS

The North Cotswolds may be very well enjoyed, especially if plenty of time be taken over the journey, by going up from Cheltenham to Andoversford, thence to Stow-on-the-Wold, north to Chipping Campden, and back along the ridge of the hills by way of Snowshill and Winchcombe.

To enter the Cotswold country from Cheltenham is to realize most completely and dramatically its peculiarly individual character. The roads from the south, and from Oxfordshire in the east, lead the traveller through a gradually transforming landscape, so that it dawns on him slowly that he is in a new and strange country, more distinctly apart from the rest of the world than any other district in England. But if he sets his back to the valley and climbs up from Cheltenham, the scene changes with breathless suddenness. He stands on the crest of the watershed; behind him the brooks go

down through lush meadows and sheltered, comfortable villages to the Severn sea, ahead in the uplands are born the first streams of the Thames to flow across the breadth of England. Instead of orchards and hedged fields here are great sweeping wolds, bare stretches of sheep-bitten upland, scattered copses, weather-worn hamlets, and over all the wandering low stone walls.

From Andoversford to Stow the road goes across the upper valley of the Coln, over a high dividing ridge, and then at right angles through the valleys of the Windrush and its tributaries. The Coln rises near Charlton Abbots and is a mere trickle past Brockhampton to Syreford, where copious springs send it on to Andoversford a respectable stream. Brockhampton was once famous throughout the hills because, in 1634, its quarries were filled with ice and snow in August, "and divers went purposely to see it, and yett it was a most extreme hott summer." This curiosity was the result of what was locally recorded in the preceding winter as the greatest fall of snow that was ever seen in the history of man.

Between Andoversford and Notgrove more and more of the downland pasture is coming under the plough, for now sheep are bred for mutton rather

than for wool, and there would be little weight in the flocks without a plentiful supply of roots. Here and there may be seen shallow quarries whence come the flat stones that, laid one on another without cement or any binding, make the Cotswold walls. These stones are soft and of a yellowish-cream colour when they are first quarried, but out on the wind-swept hills they quickly harden and weather to an ashen grey. Near Notgrove the watershed is deeply cleft with little valleys that often shelter a row of hives, veritable "bee-loud glades"; there is much clover on the hills, and in the folds of the downs are great patches of wild thyme.

The Cheltenham-Stow road crosses the infant Windrush at Harford Bridge, and it is hard to resist the temptation of wandering from the highway to Naunton and the Guitings, along the little stream with its rich borders of meadowsweet and burnished marigolds. Midway between here and Stow is Eyford, once the country seat of the Earls of Shrewsbury. Milton is said to have come to Eyford in his blindness, sensing the quiet beauty of the countryside, to compose the great music of *Paradise Lost*. Twenty years later Dutch William, mourning the death of Queen Mary, stayed a night

with the Duke of Shrewsbury and was refreshed by the visit, "for he thought himself out of the world" in this remote corner of the hills. At Eyford one may turn aside from the road and follow a brook through the two Slaughters—an unhappy name, though there is no record that it is the heritage of any dark and bloody encounter. Between the villages is a splendid Cotswold manor house, a lively witness to Elizabethan well-being from its many-gabled high-pitched roof to its vaulted basement, and a prominent Jacobean porch of two storeys enhances its dignity and beauty.

Lower Slaughter is one of the most delightful of all the water villages in these valleys. Old grey houses stand along the stream, which here is broad and clear and crossed by a number of the little stone bridges that are better known as part of the quality of Bourton. This latter village, across the Fosse Way, has been less fortunate in the matter of seclusion, and the builders of later years have not been at pains to preserve the Cotswold harmony. In the heart of the village the Windrush widens and the houses of the old-time Bourton-on-the-Water cluster on either side, with stretches of close grass between them and the river, which is spanned by a number of low graceful bridges.

To go from Bourton to Stow is to travel the way the Romans went, straight as a crow's flight across country to the foot of the hill. Stow-on-the-Wold is actually on the crest of a high spur, so that from Chipping Campden the road enters it on the level; but if you are coming from Cheltenham, Cirencester, Burford, or the east you see it as a town set on the crown of a hill that appears to rise with impressive steepness on every side out of the country round about. The Fosse Way climbs sharply through magnificent beech-woods for a couple of miles before it leads by Stow; indeed, almost every slope of the knoll is abundantly wooded:

> A squirrel can hop from Swell to Stow
> Without resting his foot or wetting his toe.

The town is built round an ancient market square, and the dignity of its weathered grey houses contributes most to an easily appreciated atmosphere of bygone prosperity. Its position alone was sufficient in Roman times to give Stow considerable importance, still witnessed by the gathering of all the main roads here, and later on the Fair spread Stow's renown through the breadth of England. Sheep, cattle, and cheeses changed hands in great quantities at the Fair; it

was the chief festival of its kind in this part of the country, and at one time the recognized market of the Welsh traders. In the social and economic history of medieval England the country fair played a far more important part than the more strictly commercial institutions of later times, and Stow Fair at its height was a dominating influence in Cotswold life.

There is a broad green in the splendid market square, and here, under the protection of a noble tree, stand the stocks. Unpleasant enough to spend a winter's day with the legs clamped in this oaken vice at "Stow on the Wold, where the wind blows cold," but an afternoon in the stocks in summer would be a delightful imprisonment—supposing the good townsfolk went about their own business. At the other end of the square is a fourteenth-century preaching cross which was restored at great expense by the lord of the manor of Maugersbury fifty years ago, when a fearsome array of spikes was set at the base, a defence which would have been welcome to many of the preachers, but which is an unnecessary hedge about an ancient monument, and altogether ugly.

Over the altar in Stow Church hangs a great picture of the Crucifixion, painted by a pupil of

THE STOCKS, STOW-ON-THE-WOLD.

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Rubens; it covers almost all the east window, and consequently much of the detail is lost in the subdued light. It is a majestic and intimidating work, gaining a great deal in mystery because it is only dimly seen. There was constant fighting round Stow during the Civil War, and in March, 1646, several hundred Royalist prisoners were shut up in the church. The damage they did was repaired forty years later under strange circumstances. The son and heir of Lord Wharton, having dined handsomely at the house of Sir Edmund Bray at Great Barrington in this county, sallied out into the village and found scope for his drunken humour at the church. He rang the bells backwards, cut the ropes, overturned the pulpit, and tore the Bible in pieces, for which knavery the wise Bishop of Gloucester exacted a substantial fine for the restoration of Stow Church, on the hills eight miles to the north.

Stow has a peculiar charm at night. From a window on the east side of the town you may look over the lower wolds as from a watch-tower; the lights of village and farmstead glow in the mist like stars, and on a calm night there is a most solemn, haunting stillness.

The only road out of Stow that does not lead

steeply over the brow is that which runs straight to Campden Hill at eight hundred feet above the sea, leaving on the right Moreton-in-the-Marsh and Bourton-on-the-Hill, and then turns due north to Chipping Campden. This, the great wool-market of Cotswold, is the finest town in the hills, and has kept more completely than any other its original character. The golden age of Campden was the fourteenth century, when it was the home of wealthy merchants who loaded here their trains of pack-horses with Cotswold wool for Flanders. All the hills for miles round were then grazed by vast flocks of sheep—small animals with thick coats, prized above all for their wool and of very little account for mutton. Cirencester, Northleach, and Chipping Campden were the chief clearing-houses for the fleeces, and their prosperity at that time may be easily judged to-day.

In its breadth and curving sweep the main street of Chipping Campden is strikingly reminiscent of the High at Oxford, and it is not unlikely that the same workmen had a hand in both. Domestic buildings in stone are found here in many different styles, yet in perfect harmony. But it is the Cotswold house that is most common, built with large stones, having windows of fine masonry with the

familiar label moulding above, and high-pitched gabled roofs grey with weathered stone tiles. So broad is the street that there are buildings in the middle of it: the town hall, which is still in part the fourteenth-century Woolstaplers' Hall, and the low, comfortable market-place built by Sir Baptist Hicks. Further up towards the church is the house of that other benefactor of the town, William Grevel. Grevel died in the second year of the fifteenth century, and his dwelling is still one of the inhabited houses of Campden, long and low, with exquisite gables and double-storeyed bay windows the height of the house.

Almost opposite Grevel's house you turn off the main street to the church, which stands a little above the rest of the town, in a position meet for the beauty and strength of its great tower. Perhaps the old houses of Campden and Cirencester create an atmosphere which gives to their churches such a greatness and dignity in the mind of the beholder, or it may be that they seem all the more splendid by contrast with the low rolling country from which they rise. At Campden especially the gentle artist Time has tinted marvellously the exterior walls of church and tower.

The harsh interior, scraped and pointed with

dark cement, has lately been beautified by an east window that is a high example of Gloucestershire craftsmanship in stained glass. In the chancel are gathered the brasses of the wool merchants: William Grevel, who was largely responsible for the rebuilding of the church, lies in effigy with Marian his wife, and is proudly described as "the flower of the wool merchants of all England"; Welley, Barker, Gibbys, rich staplers or middlemen of the fifteenth century, are here engraved—the last with his three wives and thirteen children crowding on the plate.

Grevel, ancestor of the house of Warwick, raised Campden to the height of its prosperity. For nearly a hundred years after he died the town flourished as a market for the wool growers of this part of England. The Staple, the place fixed by statute for the selling of English raw produce, was at Calais, so after being sorted and baled at Campden the Cotswold fleeces were sent across country to the Channel. But in time it was seen that the permanent well-being of England could only be established if she turned to manufacturing her own raw material. Edward III. brought over Flemish weavers to teach their art to his subjects, and when the Huguenots were expelled from France they

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OLD HOUSES AT CHIPPING CAMPDEN.

flocked to England to ply their textile crafts under kindlier conditions. So clearly did the country benefit that Elizabeth straitly forbade the export of fleeces from England.

Now this new order of things struck at the source of Campden's wealth. She had none of the natural advantages necessary to manufacture, lacking water power almost entirely; further south, the Stroudwater streams were discovered to be ideal for cleaning and dyeing the wool and turning the wheels of the mills, and in those valleys a new industry quickly grew, drawing its fleeces directly from the hills. There was no longer need for a collecting centre such as Campden, and the glory of that town departed. But the beauty of the place has remained, rare because it escaped the changes inseparable from the Industrial Revolution.

When it lost its place in commerce Campden was in danger of poverty and ultimate ruin, until in 1608 Sir Baptist Hicks became lord of the manor. He was a wealthy London merchant and banker who retired with his riches to the country and adopted this Gloucestershire town for his own. Lavish gifts came to the church, the market hall was built on an island in the main street, and, above

all, six nobly fashioned almshouses rose in the shadow of the church tower. These are still standing to the honour and glory of Baptist Hicks. Over against the almshouses is a ruined wall, flanked with two pavilions and having a blind gateway in its centre; this is all that remains of the great house that Hicks built for his family, a costly mansion of which little is known, since it was burnt to the ground to save it from Cromwell's men in the Civil War. It is said that high on the roof of his residence Sir Baptist caused a sort of lighthouse to be placed to guide the night traveller on the wolds. Twenty years after he bought the manor, and the year following his elevation to the peerage, this splendid benefactor died, leaving his two daughters £100,000 apiece. You can see him in alabaster, crowned and robed, in Campden Church.

Of William Harrison and the famous tale of mystery that centres around him, the Campden Wonder, Mr. Evans has an admirable account, and it is one of the *Historical Mysteries* examined by Andrew Lang.

Dover's Hill is about a mile out of Chipping Campden, towards Weston. From the top of the hill there is a wide view over all the vale of Evesham up into the Midlands, but the fame of this grass-

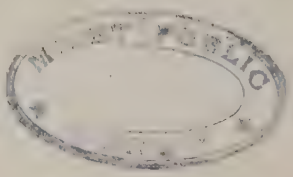
grown upland and its name belong to Ben Jonson's "jovial good friend" Mr. Robert Dover. Dover was a lawyer with too good a heart to succeed in his profession in those days; he believed that the well-being of the people could be ensured by healthy exercise and rivalry in country games, so he left his practice at Barton-on-the-Heath to institute a meeting for old English sports on the level sward that crowns the height above Campden.

Dover successfully obtained the patronage of King James I. for his project and, further, enlisted the practical sympathies of a Gloucestershire gentleman at court. "Endymion Porter, Esq., . . . a Servant of that King, a Person also of a most generous Spirit, did, to encourage Dover, give him some of the King's old Cloaths, with a Hat and Feather and Ruff, purposely to grace him, and consequently the Solemnity." This we know from Anthony Wood. "Solemnity" was a word well chosen, for Dover intended his festival to have all the ceremony and national importance of the Greek games.

In 1636 an anthology of verse appeared in honour of the games, *Annalia Dubrensia*, "Upon the yeerely Celebration of Mr. Robert Dover's Olympick Games upon Cotswold Hills," and with

it was printed a plate of the gathering. On a mound at the top of the picture is a fearsome castellated structure with two turrets, whence clouds of black smoke belch from the mouths of cannon. This was the imposing creation in which Dover mounted his guns to start the games, and for which he was acclaimed "the great Architect, and Inginere of the Famous and Admirable Portable Fabricke of Dover Castle, her Ordnance and Artillery." To one side of the tower are participants in "a country dance for virgins," decorously clad in voluminous skirts and high ruffs, while opposite them two swains strive with quarter-staves and cudgels. Amiable greyhounds course across the scene; there are horsemen, and wrestlers, and feasters before a board set with prodigious tankards; one gentleman stands neatly reversed upon his hands, another is magnificently posed to throw the hammer, others are pitching the bar. Mr. Dover himself rides proudly on a white horse among these activities, splendidly arrayed in the royal apparel.

Dover presided over the games until the Civil War, in the course of which he died. The Puritans put down such merrymaking with a stern hand, but when the king came into his own again the



BOURTON-ON-THE-HILL.

Cotswold meeting was revived and flourished for nearly two hundred years. Its character changed in time, and it became the resort of those products of the Industrial Revolution, the mill workers from the great manufacturing towns of the north. Horse-racing and coursing alone remained of the original programme, and these were made the occasion for riotous disorder, so in 1852 the games were stopped.

The great open terrace and amphitheatre where the festival was held is now overgrown and partly wooded, but it is still easy to appreciate the excellence of the site. Dover's name lives in the hill he chose for his work, and his example bears fruit yet in such as Farmer Brooks of Cooper's Hill.

> Lads of the hills and lasses of the vale
> In many a song and many a merry tale
> Shall mention thee ; and, having leave to play,
> Unto thy name shall make a holiday.
> The Cotswold shepherds, as their flocks they keep,
> To put off lazy drowsiness and sleep,
> Shall sit to tell, and hear thy story told,
> That night shall come ere they their flocks can fold.

If Dover's memory is not as green as Drayton in the *Annalia* would have it be, it is because the games are done and the Cotswold shepherds that he knew are gone from the hills.

North of Dover's Hill the Cotswolds fall down into the plain and are lost in the vale of Evesham. The county itself stretches away in a jagged peninsula between Worcestershire and Warwickshire to within a couple of miles of Stratford. In the low fields under the hills the villages are clearly of the Cotswolds—Weston, Aston, Ebrington, Mickleton —but further north they are properly of Warwickshire, except perhaps the two Meons against the beautiful outlying Meon Hill.

One road back to Cheltenham lies along the edge of the ridge, but the villages and hamlets are for the most part on the easier route below it. Saintbury nestles in a narrow cleft of the hills, its little church on higher ground above the village whence you look over level orchard country to the bare height of Bredon Hill. As vicar of Saintbury one of the most learned and most modest scholars of the New Learning, William Latimer, sheltered his quiet nature and would not allow even the entreaties of his friend Erasmus to tear him from seclusion. Beside the main road below the church is one of the few wayside crosses left from the time before England became Protestant, largely through the enlightened work of such as Latimer; the base and stem of the cross are likely to be over five hundred

years old, but there is new work at the head. From here the upper road leads over Broadway Hill to Snowshill, the lower through the tourist-ridden but still charming Worcestershire village of Broadway.

Gloucestershire is entered again at Buckland, a yeoman's hamlet almost hidden among great elms in a fold of the foot-hills. Next on the road is Stanton, with its seventeenth-century cottages and two stately houses, then Stanway on the old stone-way that comes over the wolds from Stow and here drops into the vale to make off through the fruit country towards Tewkesbury. Stanway House is a magnificent Jacobean mansion at the bottom of the hill; it should be seen for its noble gatehouse and great front of mullioned windows. All these villages are refreshingly unspoilt. They lie between promontories of the hills, sheltered from storms and escaping too the less natural forces that harry the face of the countryside.

In a niche of the Cotswolds between Stanway and Winchcombe the little village of Hailes holds the poor ruins of one of the greatest and richest Cistercian foundations. The Abbey of St. Mary of Hayles was consecrated with high pomp in the presence of Henry III. and Eleanor of Provence in 1251, when thirteen bishops celebrated

mass, each at a separate altar. A few years later Edmund, Earl of Cornwall, brought to the abbey a crystal vial containing the Holy Blood of Christ. The sanctuary of such a relic could not fail to gain fame as a place of pilgrimage, and Hailes seemed set in a fair way for renown and wealth. But one calamity followed another, fire, flood and the plague, so that folk began to whisper that the precious relic was but ducks' blood, and with the Reformation came destruction of the sacred vase and of the noble work that had risen above it. Many a farmhouse round about has consecrated stone in its walls, and at the time of the breaking up the great mansion at Toddington was considerably enlarged.

Of all the travellers from Broadway to Cheltenham there can be few who, coming upon the little town near the end of their journey, recognize Winchcombe for a city of kings. Its crowded streets and the irregular lines of its houses, the comfortable church with its preposterous weathercock, the galleried inn for pilgrims to Hailes—these have an air of quaint and quiet beauty that belies Winchcombe's history as a home of Mercian royalty. King Kenulph built a mitred abbey here in 798 and richly endowed it for his Benedictine monks. The legend of St. Kenelm, Kenulph's son, whose body was buried

at the abbey, brought pilgrims and wealth to the shrine, so that it became famous throughout the breadth of England. The young prince was secretly murdered by his sister, and the Golden Legend tells of the discovery of the crime by a dove dropping a parchment on the high altar of St. Peter's at Rome. Almost every trace of Winchcombe's bygone glory has disappeared long since, and to-day it is no more than it appears to be—a pleasant, contented village.

About a mile outside Winchcombe, to the left of the Cheltenham and Gloucester road, the Normans built Sudeley Castle in Stephen's reign. Since rebuilt and restored, this house has welcomed some of the most fascinating players on the stage of English history: Katherine Parr, widow of Henry VIII., married the lord of Sudeley, and lies buried in the chapel; her master was entrusted for a time with the care of Lady Jane Grey. Elizabeth visited Sudeley at least four times, and once a sort of pageant of Cotswold was performed in her honour by the countryfolk in sheepskins. Charles I., retreating from Gloucester, passed the night here and is supposed to have slept.

CHAPTER VI

THE SOUTH COTSWOLDS

The capital of the Cotswolds, Cirencester, lies well in the south of its domain, the last and greatest of the hill towns before the country slopes down into Wiltshire. Long and wordy battles have raged over the name of Cirencester, to very little purpose. The commonest abbreviation is the traditional Ciceter—a pleasanter word than Cicester—though you will hear the countryfolk pronounce the name as it is spelt or shorten it to Ciren.

The glory of Cirencester is its great parish church whose stately tower rises above the clean grey town, a noble monument to the piety of the wool staplers of medieval Gloucestershire. Before the south porch a broad market-place marks, with the church, the centre of the town; the chief streets and winding lanes all lead here, by crooked houses rich in the strength and beauty of oak timbering and mellowed stone. It is an example of the best

Cotswold towns, in which new buildings take nothing from the dignity of the whole.

Cirencester's high importance in the economic history of this part of England can easily be judged from the general appearance of domestic prosperity that is as clear to-day as it has been for five hundred years, but for the signs of an earlier and a more national distinction you must go to a map. It will be seen that here cross three great Roman highways: the Fosse Way from Exeter and Bath runs straight along the wolds to Stow and thence to Lincoln, the Ermine Street comes out of the south-west on its way to Gloucester, and the Ickneild Street strikes across country towards Oxford. When the Twentieth Legion was pressing the British tribes back to the Severn and into the Welsh hills, Cirencester was taken from the Dobuni, whose chief town it was, and re-christened Corinium by the invaders. The Roman eye for strategy saw in this the centre of the easily traversed upland, so that Corinium of the Dobuni grew in size to be second only to London.

Those who are interested in the Roman occupation will find little to see outside the museums. Beyond the Churn there are still traces of the wall that was built two miles in circumference round

Corinium, and in a field called the Querns on the opposite side of the town are remains of what may have been an amphitheatre. When the Legions departed they left the British tribes softened through long years of enforced peace, and the West Saxons found them easy prey; after his victory at Dyrham in this country Ceawlin captured Corinium and it was then that much of the Roman work was destroyed.

There was little of the greatness of the Roman town in the Anglo-Saxon Cyrencæstre, but after the Conquest it became a busy hive of craftsmen and merchants who laid the foundations of that wealth which through the Middle Ages built up the greatest parish church in all Gloucestershire. The south porch of the church dominates the market-place more immediately than does the tower. It was originally a building of three storeys, as the two tiers of the splendid bay windows indicate, but since the restoration of 1831 there has been only one upper room. This was clearly built for more than a porch, and it seems to have served as a meeting-place for the trade guilds of medieval Cirencester, being called the Church House or Vice. This latter name is a problem ; it may have been a corruption of Parvise, a church

EBRINGTON.

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court, or perhaps the townsfolk spoke of the curious addition to their church as a strange contrivance or de*vice*.

There is nothing unusual in the association of the guilds with the church, for they were responsible for the mysteries or morality plays that linked so closely the religious with the secular life of England in the merry days. The quaint allegorical characters who took part in these plays are to be seen carved as gargoyles under the parapet of the nave of Cirencester Church: Death with a bell and spade, a dancing bear and a monkey playing the bagpipes, the lord of the feast, the Knight of the Woeful Countenance—such were the figures that showed the good craftsmen their follies and made them tremble for the wrath to come.

The tower is rich in panelling and tracery, but is most striking perhaps in the beauty of its outline and perfect proportions. A spire was originally intended, and two supremely graceful flying buttresses sweep up for its support. The nave was built at the beginning of the sixteenth century, a hundred years after the tower.

The church is sufficiently imposing from without, but the interior has the unmistakable air of a cathedral: the slenderness of the clustered pillars

supporting the arches of the nave enhances the loftiness of a rich oaken roof, happy hunting ground of the insatiable death-watch beetle, and the chapels about the chancel give the building a character above that of a parish church. The Chapel of the Holy Trinity, against the north wall, is the largest and most magnificent, and here the most recent work of restoration has been carried out with admirably sympathetic craftsmanship. In the walls of the chapels adjoining the chancel are hagioscopes, called "squints" for the better understanding, oblique openings in the walls through which worshippers in the chapels might look up to the altar at the elevation of the Sacred Host.

Of the brasses, the small one near the Lady Chapel is the most attractive, setting forth the good deeds of Philip Marner, who died in 1587:

> In Lent by will a sermon he devised
> And yeerly precher with a noble prised;
> Seven nobles he did geve ye poore for to defend,
> And £80 to XVI men did lend
> In Cicester, Burford, Abington and Tetburie.

Close to this record of spiritual and material charity, inside the chapel, is the tablet to "Samuel Rudder of this Town, Printer," and historian of his native county.

Curfew still rings on winter nights from the tower of Cirencester Church, and on holy days you may hear the Gospel and Epistle bells; what now are pretty customs were once outward signs of the closely interwoven life of church and town.

The church has escaped battle and siege, but twice it has served as a military prison. In the reign of Henry IV. a rebellion in favour of the deposed Richard met with no success at Windsor, and the rebel Dukes of Aumerle, Surrey and Exeter retreated into the west. Holinshed has chronicled their reception on Cotswold: "They came to Cirencester in the dark of the night, and took up their lodgings. The inhabitants, suspecting the matter as the truthe was, tooke counsaile together, and got them to armour, and stopped all the entries and outgates of the inns where these new guests were lodged; when they, about midnight, secretlie attempted to come forthe and goe their waies, the townsmen with bowe and arrowe were ready to stay them and keep them in." Keep them in they did—in the abbey church, the predecessor of the present building. To divert the townsmen's attention the insurgents started a fire in some of the houses, and this is what Shakespeare had in mind when he wrote, in *King Richard II.*,

> the latest news we hear
> Is that the rebels have consumed with fire
> Our town of Ciceter in Gloucestershire.

But the diversion was carried further than the noble lords' intention: "the townsmen, to revenge themselves of them, brought them forthe of the abbey and, on the twilight of the eveninge, stroke off their heads."

For their loyalty, the king rewarded his people with four does in season and a hogshead of wine yearly to the men, and six bucks and a hogshead of wine yearly to the women.

In the Civil War, Cirencester was strongly for Parliament, so in due time Prince Rupert stormed its fortifications. He carried the town on Candlemas Day, 1643, and over a thousand of the defenders were driven into the church. They were shut up for two days without food, save such as their friends pushed through the broken windows of the nave, and then were marched off to Oxford. There was further fighting here during the Royalist occupation, for the town was "esteemed the key of Gloucester."

The most interesting street in Cirencester is that which leaves the centre of the town as Dollar Street—a corruption of Dole Hall—and continues

CIRENCESTER.

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as Gloucester Street into the Roman way leading to that city. All the more modest styles of domestic architecture from the Elizabethan to the Georgian are found among the prevailing native Cotswold type, and the street is remarkable for the narrow alleys and lanes that give it a character of unusual intimacy. Where Gloucester Street begins, Spitalgate Lane to the right passes the low wide arches of St. John's Hospital, a charitable hostel founded by Henry I. (in spite of the tablet on the wall); the remains are apparently those of the nave of the chapel, and from the shortness of the pillars one would imagine that the ground level was originally considerably lower. Another medieval hospital is that of St. Thomas, also off Dollar Street. This was built for the succour of four destitute weavers, and as an almshouse it still fulfils its purpose, although its inhabitants may be no longer weavers; such tiny windows as give on to the street were perhaps built in kindly consideration of privacy.

The great park at Cirencester was made by the first Lord Bathurst, that versatile nobleman who is most widely known by his friendship with the leading satirists, poets and dramatists of the eighteenth century. He enclosed a vast expanse of

open wold to the west of the town and planted it with the wealth of trees that now stand so majestically along the rides of the park. A pretentious summer-house in the classic style has been built in the park to mark the favourite bower of Alexander Pope, the most frequent visitor of all Lord Bathurst's literary protégés. This embittered genius dutifully versified the works of his patron,

> Whose rising forests, not for pride or show,
> But future buildings, future navies, grow;
> Let his plantations stretch from down to down,
> First shade and country, and then noise and town.

Fortunately for us, the risen forest has not served these utilitarian purposes, but stands a just pride and worthy show.

In the park are the kennels of Earl Bathurst's Vale of White Horse hounds, and from here there is riding with the Badminton, Cotswold and Berkeley packs. Arthur Gibbs, whose *Cotswold Village* has this countryside between its covers, wrote of the hunting from Cirencester: "Not only is a different stamp of country to be met with each day of the week, but on one and the same day you may be riding over banks, small flying fences, and sound grass, or deep ploughs and pasture divided by hairy bullfinches, or, again, over light plough

and stone walls; and to this fact may be attributed the exceptional number of good performers over a country that this district turns out. . . . Brought up to the sport from the cradle, the Gloucestershire natives, squires, farmers, all sorts and conditions of men, ride as straight as a die."

Of the roads that radiate from Cirencester like spokes from the hub of a wheel, the one which leads due east goes through the Ampneys to Fairford and Lechlade. In the churchyard of Ampney Crucis is a splendid early fifteenth century cross, which alone among the ancient wayside crosses on Cotswold still stands as it was built; all the rest, like that at Condicote, have lost their original heads. And so too did the cross at Ampney Crucis, for it was found in the rood loft of the church and restored to its weather-beaten shaft some fifty years ago. On the four sides of the gabled cross-head are carved panels of the Crucifixion, the Mother and Child, a knight in armour, and St. Lawrence with his gridiron. The church of the Holy Rood would seem to point to this delightful village being one of the oldest on the hills, for it shows a considerable amount of Saxon and early English work.

From Cirencester you come into Fairford by a

low bridge over the Coln, which is here a broad stream almost at the end of its independence, famous for the trout that may be taken when the May-fly is up. The three-pounders will rise in the evening, "for you are to note, that the great old Trout is both subtle and fearful and lies close all day, and does not usually stir out of his hold, but lies in it as close in the day as the timorous hare does in her form." Izaak would have delighted in Fairford; good sport could be counted on, and he would be pretty sure to find "fresh sheets that smell of lavender."

The town is singularly peaceful, its broad street and substantial stone houses having the air of such as have seen prosperity and busyness long since. John Tame, wool merchant, was the maker of Fairford, for Leland tells that it "never florished afore the cumming of the Tames onto it." To him the town owes its chief distinction, the possession of the only church in England with the whole of its original set of stained-glass windows intact; further, the medieval glass is of rare quality. John Tame started to rebuild the church, but he died in 1496, and his son Sir Edmund finished the work.

The most diverting theories of the origin of the Fairford glass are the least acceptable, as, for

FAIRFORD.

example, that it was captured at sea by the Tames, who built a church at Fairford to hold the windows intended for the Papal Palace at Rome, or that the artist was Albert Dürer—although the signature "A" bears not the slightest resemblance to his own. In all probability the work was entirely English, with a strong Flemish influence, done when the arts of glazing and painting were at their height. The windows form a connected series, a vivid representation of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Much has been written about them, and an adequate catalogue may be had at the church, but here it is sufficient to remark the tremendous west window, the great Doom or Last Judgment. The scene is not confined to one light, but spreads over the whole width of the window. Below the transom, under the rich blue vault of heaven, stands Michael with scales and sword, and about his feet the dead rise from their graves; on Michael's right the Saved go up the golden stairs, while on the other hand purple devils carry the Damned into the glowing ruby flames of Hell. These little devils, begetting laughter rather than terror, are the most fascinating figures of all; in the tracery lights of the clerestory, too, they leer and squint in grey and blue and green.

The plain substantial house in which John Keble was born is still as it was in 1792, the birthyear also of Shelley, who once rowed up the Thames to Lechdale, on the border of the county four miles beyond Fairford, and there conceived the beauty of *A Summer Evening Churchyard.* From Lechlade sets out the canal that joins Thames and Severn, and here is that older union, not made with hands, of which Drayton sang:

> Cleere Colne and lovely Leche go down from Cotswold's plain,
> At Lechlade linking hands, come likewise to support
> The mother of great Thames.

The Coln comes down to Fairford from a group of lovely villages—Hatherop, Quenington and Coln St. Aldwyn, from Bibury with its gabled cottages along the stream, and Ablington, the home of Arthur Gibbs. This is the heart of the country of *A Cotswold Village.*

Following the meandering course of the stream towards its source, the Fosse Way is reached, and a more thickly wooded country takes the place of the broad and open downs. The Coln skirts the northern fringe of Chedworth woods, under whose shelter a gamekeeper and his ferret in 1864 found the first traces of the remarkably complete remains

of a large Roman villa. The arrangement of the great house can be appreciated with the least imagination, for there are the lower courses of the walls, the rooms clearly divided, splendid mosaic floors with heating space beneath, bathrooms, bake-house, laundry and smithy. The courtyard in the centre has well-kept turf and flower-beds, and there is about the whole an atmosphere of ordered care that adds to the ease of reconstructing the scene. There is less of the museum about Chedworth villa than about the remains at Bath or at any of the other Roman cities, for this mansion in the hills looks down the same slope and out over the same quiet valley to the same great highroad that its builders and owners knew, and a sweeping glance takes in a landscape that can be very little changed.

About three miles north of its bridge over the Coln, the Fosse Way strikes the Cheltenham-Oxford road at Northleach, a plain undistinguished village in a hollow of the wolds. Northleach to-day seems singularly unworthy of its large and beautiful parish church, for apart from this building there is nothing to show that this was the central wool-market of the Cotswolds, equal in importance to Cirencester and Chipping Campden, and on

account of its position perhaps wealthier than they. In the centre of the one long street is an open square that was once the market where the fleeces from the surrounding hills were sold to the rich factors or staplers, who in their turn struck bargains with the merchants of London and Flanders.

The time of Northleach's greatness was in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when the princely buyers came from Lombardy and Florence and the Low Countries. There is a vivid picture of business at and about Northleach in the letters of the Celys, a family of London wool merchants who exported to the Staple at Calais in the reign of Edward IV.—that same king who sent the Cotswold sheep to Castile. The Celys' chief trade was in Cotswold wool, and young Richard was frequently at Northleach buying fleeces and fells to ship to his brother "Jorge Cely" at Calais. Richard's letters show that all his time was not given over to business when he rode down to Gloucestershire, for there was good sport to be had with a hawk on the wolds, and his local manager, William Midwinter, would provide game of another sort. Midwinter, anxious to do his friends a good turn, sounded young Cely as to whether he was in the way of marriage, saying that he would

have him meet a "zeunge gentyll whoman hos father ys deyd." Richard wrote to George a full account of his feelings towards the young woman and of the financial transactions involved, but evidently the matter fell through, for less than a fortnight later the adventurous merchant writes to his brother about another damsel, although he had to admit that William Midwinter's choice was "lytyll and wherey whell favyrd and whytty."

The splendid Perpendicular church is the only remaining indication of those busy days, standing unspoilt since its rebuilding by the pious wool staplers who are portrayed on brasses in the nave and chancel. The seven brasses to the woolmen date between 1400 and 1525, the years of prosperity in Northleach, and the most interesting of them is that which shows John Fortey—who rebuilt the nave—with his feet on a woolpack and a sheep, and his merchant's mark at the four corners of the inscription. No parish church in England has a finer porch than that at Northleach; it is a high double-bayed structure, graceful and stately, but not so pretentious that it seems a building apart from the church, as does the great Vice at Cirencester.

Before going down over the watershed from the

headstreams of the Thames into the Severn valley, it may be of interest, and certainly not without argument, to make a search for the true source of the river of London. About three miles south of Cirencester the Isis rises from Trewsbury Meadow, not so much a spring as a tiny rivulet draining the field. This spot, close to the canal, has long been known as Thames Head, and has been held by many—especially the people of Cirencester—as the source of the river. But if the source is the highest point where a river has its water, then we must go off up the Ermine Street from Cirencester, branch off at Elkstone and visit its Norman church, and then cross a high ridge into the valley of the upper Churn. At Seven Springs, three miles beyond Elkstone and just under Peggles-worth Hill, which looks out over Cheltenham to the Worcestershire beacons, is another reputed source of the Thames. Here an attempt has been made to clinch the argument by a plate on the grey wall over the roadside pool, with the hexameter:

Hic tuus O Tamisine Pater septem geminus fons.

But a little way down the infant Churn, at Cobberley, another stream comes into it from the

west; this may be followed for nearly two miles until its course passes under the road between Seven Springs and the Ermine Street, and enters the grounds of Ullenwood House, where presumably it rises. This, then, is the highest of all the headwaters of the Thames, and the beginning of the stream farthest from its mouth; so that the first river of England has its true birth at Ullenwood and its christening at Cricklade, where the Isis contributes its waters and its name.

The road from Cirencester beyond Thames Head runs along the border of the county over the southernmost slopes of the Cotswolds down towards Bristol. At Rodmarton it leaves the Fosse Way and goes through lonely country to Tetbury, past the isolated inn of melancholy aspect and forbidding name, Trouble House. William Cobbett, riding to Stroud in the autumn of 1826, entered Gloucestershire at Tetbury: "there being here a sort of dell, or ravine, which in this place, is the boundary line of the two counties, and over which you go on a bridge, one half of which belongs to each county." It is a clean, compact little town, as solidly built as you might expect of one of the smaller ancient wool marts of the hills.

Beverston Castle, on the Kingscote Road a

couple of miles outside Tetbury, is an ivy-covered ruin of one of the earliest Norman castles in England. At Beverston the Royalists held out for Charles I., but Major-General Massey took it by storm with such vigour that rebuilding was out of the question, and the battered walls with staring breaches and windows like sightless eyes remain as he left them, save for the merciful cloak of ivy. Across the fields to the north is the secluded manor of Chavenage, built in shape of an E to testify to the loyalty of the first owners to their queen. There is a great hall at Chavenage, having high latticed windows stained with the arms and devices of knightly Elizabethans.

Colonel Ireton, travelling the country in search of influential assenters to the execution of King Charles, came to Chavenage when its squire was one Nathaniel Stevens. Ireton pleaded his cause successfully, but to the undoing of the squire. For it is said that, a few months after the king's death, there drew up to Chavenage Manor a sable coach driven by a headless coachman with a star on his breast; Nathaniel Stevens passed into the coach, whereat the ghostly visitor, his horses, carriage and the unhappy occupant, vanished in flames of fire!

THE VILLAGE TREE, AMPNEY CRUCIS.

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CHAPTER VII

THE STROUDWATER VALLEYS

It is singular that so many writers on the Cotswolds have regarded Cirencester as their southern limit, and have given only passing notice to the valleys about Stroud, hurrying away from them as if outside their province. Yet the Golden Valley of Stroudwater is the deepest and most beautiful of all the inlets that fret the western escarpment of the hills, going down from Sapperton and Chalford to Stroud, and broadening out between the noble bastions of Haresfield and Frocester to the vale of Severn. Below Chalford the Stroud valley proper receives a number of tributaries, each with a character of its own, though none quite as lovely as the quiet upper reaches of the Stroudwater stream.

This deeply cleft countryside is like no other part of Gloucestershire; the wind-swept uplands that break abruptly on the skyline above them are as a

foreign land to the valley-dwellers, nor can the ravines hold those broad meadows that lie on the Gloucester plain and the vale of Berkeley.

Except at Minchinhampton, where there is wide and level common, the lofty spurs between the valleys carry no tableland, but drop sharply away on either side. Copses, cottages, orchards, and gardens cling to these steep hillsides in a manner that astonishes and delights the eye wearied of the great spaces on the wolds, and over the face of the terraced slopes spreads a tangle of bridle-paths and apparently impossible roads. Along the bottom of the main valley wanders a richly weed-grown canal, now disused above Stroud, and so unbusinesslike as to add to the loveliness of the scene, while every watercourse can be traced by the succession of grey stone mills athwart its stream.

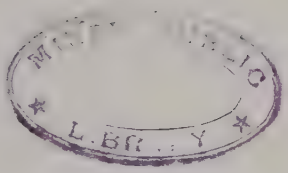
It must be known that the mills in this fortunate corner of England are homely, mellow buildings, as far removed from the great infernos of modern industry as are the cottages of Bibury from the habitations of Bermondsey. By their character, as well as by their actual presence, they bear witness to that making of fine broadcloth for which Stroud is still well known and once was famous. Before the sixteenth century almost all the wool grown in

England was exported, to the great gain of such merchants as the Grevels, Tames and Forteys on the Cotswolds, but then came an increasing number of aliens to teach the English people how to make their wool into cloth. Encouraged originally by Edward III., and needing no inducement when persecuted at the time of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve, the Huguenot weavers flocked to this country and showed the way to prosperity through craftsmanship.

In the development of cloth-making the Stroud valleys at once took a high position on account of those peculiar advantages of which Fuller wrote: "First, plenty of the best wool growing on Cotswold Hills; so that whereas clothiers in some counties fetch their wool far off with great cost, it is here but the removing it from the backs of the sheep into their work-houses. Secondly, they have the benefit of an excellent water for colouring their cloth, being the sweet rivulet of Stroud, which, arising about Brimsfield, runneth across the shire into the Severn." The newcomers from the Low Countries were quick to appreciate the natural qualities of this district: "In time past the use of wool consisted for the most part in clothes and worsteds; but now, by means of strangers

succoured here from domestic persecution, the same hath been employed into sundry other uses, as mockados, bays, vellures, grograms, etc., whereby the makers have reaped no small commodity." So it came about that a traveller coming into Stroud in 1681 could write from Painswick that "here you begin to enter the land of the clothiers, who in these bourns building fair houses because of the convenience of water, so useful for their trade, do extend their country some miles."

The Civil War almost ruined the industry, and the clothiers of Stroud cried out that they were "utterly undone," but the thriftiness of the hand-loom weavers endured the troublous times. The introduction of machinery at the end of the eighteenth century was not welcomed by the small mills in the valleys, nor of course by the great number of workers who plied their craft at home. This attitude of antagonism to mechanical innovations was backed by a tradition of three hundred years, for it is recorded that one gentleman who built a fulling mill in the Stroud valley in 1485 was set upon by "malefactors with swords, sticks, bows and arrows, scythes, jakkes, armour, etc., with intent to murder him, so that he was many times affrighted and disturbed." In this district, how-



WINCHCOMBE.

ever, during the years of the Industrial Revolution there was no serious rioting such as occurred in other parts of England and in some towns of Gloucestershire. To-day the cloth trade is concentrated in the factories of Nailsworth, Stroud, and Stonehouse, so that the rattle of the loom comes no longer from the little stone mills; some of them are converted for other industries, others stand along the streams in sad but comely desolation.

The little river that, with its tributary brooks, has carved so exquisitely the contours of the Stroudwater hills and dales is the Frome, which rises on the wolds towards Miserden and comes down by Sapperton to idle its way along the bed of the upper valley above Chalford. This is the Golden Valley.

Gloucestershire is essentially a county whose beauties appear to best advantage to the man who goes by road, for the railway runs for the most part through low country with a restricted field of view, or else the foreground of the scene from a carriage window is smirched with the more unwelcome evidences of civilization. But it is the railway that presents the Golden Valley to its patrons with a magnificently dramatic gesture. Suppose a traveller to be coming down from Paddington to Gloucester,

and let him be one of the true travellers who look out into the country towards which they go, rather than one of those unimaginative journeymen who by choice ride backwards (for surely what little adventure the railroad leaves to us lies in letting our eyes travel ahead of the train to enjoy a constant pleasure of expectation, and not in looking back over the horse's tail, as it were, on scenes that are lost before they can be appreciated). This traveller, then, with his face to the west, is carried along from Kemble Junction through an open countryside of unrelieved ploughland and pasture until he passes under the Cirencester-Stroud road and enters Sapperton tunnel. This stretch of line climbs a steep gradient through the brow of the Cotswolds, and for a mile there is no relief to the dreariness of the tunnel save the monotonous chant of the labouring engine.

For all who have escaped the misfortune of forgetting their childhood there is always a little of the old excitement on coming out of any tunnel for the first time, and this traveller from London is to be pitied if he does not catch his breath when the murkiness of Sapperton tunnel suddenly gives way to the full glory of the Chalford valley on an autumn afternoon. Golden it is, from the bright

glow of the hanging beech wood to the glitter of the brook far below and the warm mellow tones of old gold that paint the cottages clinging miraculously to the hillside. Ravine is too harsh a word for this valley, but its sides are precipitous, sudden, and breathless; and the village itself is a lasting wonder, for it appears to have been poured incontinent down the steep slope and by some strange chance to have frozen in complete security, all unconscious of its good fortune. On the terraces of Chalford they used to dry the cloths dyed in the Frome below, and you may still see on Rank Hill the banks on which scarlets for the East India Company's private regiments were spread out to the sun.

The overgrown canal beside the Frome or Stroudwater connects the Thames at Lechlade with the Severn at Framilode, though for much of its length it has long been impassable for the lightest of barges. Up at the head of the valley the village of Sapperton possesses the ornate entrance to a canal tunnel of two and a half miles, so great a feat of engineering in its day that George the Third came down in state to open it. Half a century before they were constructed, the canal and tunnel were in the mind of that versatile Lord Bathurst

from whose seat at Cirencester Alexander Pope wrote to a friend about "the meeting of the Thames and Severn, which (when the noble owner has finer dreams than ordinary) are to be led into each other's embraces through secret caverns of not above twelve or fifteen miles, till they rise and celebrate their marriage in the midst of an immense amphitheatre, which is to be the admiration of posterity a hundred years hence." Posterity may not have ceased to admire, but it has certainly ceased to enjoy the fruits of the noble lord's conception. To work a barge through this tunnel was an arduous task; the bargee would lie on his side at the edge of his craft and propel her through the slimy gloom by treading the sides of the tunnel with his feet.

The railway runs down to Stroud well up on the south side of the valley, while in the bottom, river, road and canal keep company. The Stroudwater hills are dimpled and wrinkled with dingles, clefts, and worn bridle-paths, but here and there definite folds in the country carry brooks down to the Frome. Such a one has its head at Bisley, where below the churchyard the rivulet is ushered portentously into the world through seven springs. By its solid comfortable cottages clustered round the

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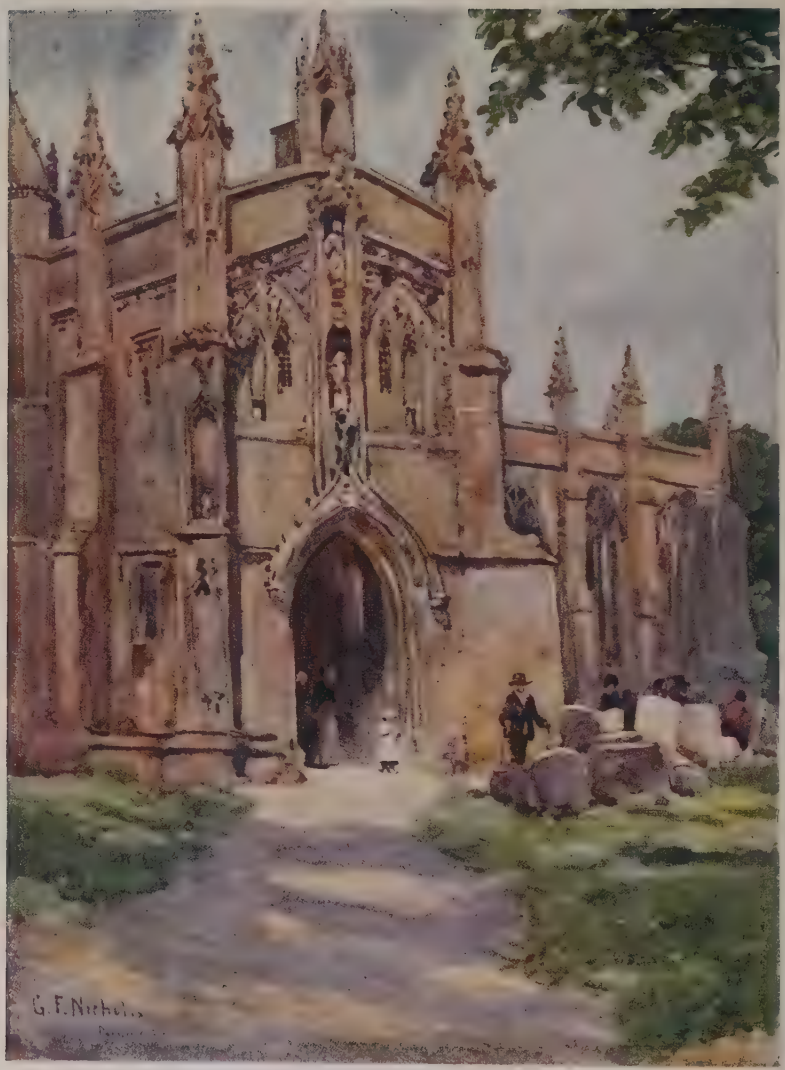

THE CHURCH PORCH, NORTHLEACH.

church, and by its very present atmosphere of lost prosperity, it is easy to recognize Bisley for an old wool town. It was, indeed, the earliest that thrived in these hills, but the seven springs could not drive a mill and the coming of machinery took the trade away to the valleys. A writer at the beginning of the last century has a pathetic reference to Bisley's plight; he says, "I cannot forget the colonies of mendicants which, thirty years ago, poured into the adjacent towns. . . . If you asked a beggar whence he came, it was common, even to a proverb, for him to answer: 'From Bisley—God help!'" To this period doubtless belongs the local jingle:

> Beggarly Bisley, strutting Stroud,
> Mincing Hampton and Painswick proud.

In a pleasant park on the slope below Bisley stands Lypiatt House, in which, Sir Robert Atkyns averred, the Gunpowder Plot was hatched. John Throckmorton, who owned the house at the time, was a close friend of that Robert Catesby who was the prime mover in the machinations of which Guy Fawkes was but the poor, unfortunate tool. A room where the conspirators are supposed to have met, and a letter from Lord Monteagle addressed to Catesby at Lypiatt, are the grounds for this notoriety; but since Throckmorton received no

accusation from the Government after the thirty-six barrels of gunpowder had been discovered beneath the Lords, it must be assumed that Atkyns painted Lypiatt blacker than she was. The author of *The Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire* was buried in Sapperton Church in 1711, and perhaps he was biassed by anxiety to give fame to his own locality, even if it were ill fame.

Under the woods of Lypiatt lies Toadsmoor Lake, set here to prove Nature a true woman, for it is a mirror held to ravishing beauty. The name of this shining gem in its exquisite setting is a shrewd foil, leading the unwary traveller to expect that

> The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
> And no birds sing.

Instead, he finds Toadsmoor girdled with flourishing reeds and water-bushes, and in spring the burgeoning beeches loud with blackbird and thrush.

It is not fair to go straight from Toadsmoor to Stroud, for the town is altogether unworthy of the countryside that bears its name. In the comfortable clothing days of a hundred years ago, when men went about their business with reasonable deliberation, this must have been a solid, pleasant town of climbing streets and stone houses good to

look upon. But now the narrow roads are all inadequate, choked with motor traffic, and filled with a busyness that is rather tiresome to one who is wandering among the hills and dales about the town. Perhaps this is as well, for clearly it shows that its ancient prosperity has not forsaken Stroud, and it is essential that so delectable a neighbourhood should have an active centre which resists the pale beauty of decay.

Stroud is built on the hillside, and you must go downhill to take the road to Painswick, along the bottom of the last and longest tributary valley of the Frome on the north. In character this is not so much a Stroudwater valley as one of Cotswold, although Pitchcombe on the left is hidden among its orchards, and orchards are rare on the wolds. Painswick itself, though by nature more picturesque, is still as Stroud may once have been ; coming from the latter place it is first seen at the top of a sharp slope in the road ahead, a stone town, substantial, not dead like Bisley, but beautiful on account of the perfect blending of architecture and natural position.

The spire of St. Mary's at Painswick is a graceful example of Perpendicular work, but it is the churchyard that draws the eye with its marshalled ranks

of clipped yew trees. Whether there are a hundred trees or more is beside the point, for ninety-nine is the traditional and time-honoured number. Once a year, on the Sunday before Michaelmas, the old custom of "clipping" is observed at Painswick; this has nothing to do with the pruning of the yews, but survives from the time when to clip meant to clasp. The children of the village join hands and, singing the while, form a chain round the church—perhaps a symbol that as they clasp their arms about the building so they embrace the faith for which it stands.

Close to the church is the gabled court house, so called because Charles I. stayed here on his way to Gloucester in 1643 and issued a proclamation "at our Court at Paynewicke." From this point you may look out due east over the peaceful valley of Sheepscombe, where Sir Anthony Kingston, lord of the manor of Painswick at the middle of the sixteenth century, set up a gallows on which to swing any who showed their discontent with the land enclosures. According to Rudder, Sir Anthony was thorough in his measures, providing not only the gibbet, but also three estates: "one always to maintain the gallows, a second to keep two ladders in readiness, and the third to provide halters; and

that nothing in so necessary a business might be wanting, provided that the tithing man of Sheepscombe should be hangman, and that he should enjoy an acre of land in that tithing for his service."

A mile to the north of the town, Painswick Beacon lifts its head nine hundred feet above the sea ; the crown is furrowed with the triple ramparts of Kimsbury Camp, a Roman stronghold on this highest point in the South Cotswolds. On the Cheltenham road, that goes up from Painswick beside the Beacon, is Paradise. Charles I., in his unhappiness at Gloucester's disloyalty, is said to have rested his eyes on this sheltered coomb and declared it to be as fair as Paradise, and a king's words were not forgotten. There are more trees than one in Paradise, and excellent cider may be had at the Adam and Eve. From here the road rises to take the high edge of the hills and look out over that same indescribably glorious view of Gloucester and the vale that is glimpsed between the tree-trunks of Birdlip. The way to Cheltenham leads through " Cranham's sober trees," and at Birdlip strikes the Ermine Street where it begins to descend to the Gloucester plain.

Of about the same length as the Painswick valley, but very different in character, is that which comes

down from Nailsworth on the opposite side of Stroud. Between this broad fold in the hills and the main valley of Stroudwater rise the open common lands of Amberley and Minchinhampton. Amberley Common is the Enderley Flat of *John Halifax, Gentleman*: "the highest tableland in England" he called it in the enthusiasm of his description to the patient Phineas, "such a fresh, free, breezy spot —how the wind sweeps over it . . . there's something so gloriously free in this high level common." Rose Cottage, where John stayed when he came over from Norton Bury, and where he first knew the raptures and agonies of his love for Ursula March, is a little stone house above Amberley village. No longer do the rose bushes cluster up to its very roof, and the bare walls with their tiny windows give the cottage an air of bleakness which was never there when Miss Mulock worked out her noble story under its roof.

Beyond Amberley, towards Stroud, Minchinhampton Common has a splendid golf course where the newcomer finds it a hard task to keep his eye from wandering from the ball to the beauties of the steep valleys on either side. Still further to the west the common narrows to the spur of Rodborough, standing sentinel over Stroud.

Rose Cottage is on the slope overlooking the winding valley where John Halifax had his cloth mill. At Nailsworth in this valley the Flemish weavers discovered fuller's earth and so thrived that, as Fosbroke was told, "a prime Dutch cloth maker had the surname of Webb given him by Edward III." Below Nailsworth the Romans built on the western slope of the valley one of the most secluded of their settlements in Britain, and their presence is witnessed to-day not only by the name Woodchester, but also by a notably well-preserved tessellated pavement. This formed the floor of the hall of a great villa, and is now preserved by burial, being uncovered so rarely that the chance of seeing it occurs but once in a lifetime; the last two uncoverings were in 1880 and 1926. The subject of the mosaic is the story of Orpheus, that sweet singer, patterned within an intricate and exquisitely designed border. The infinite patience and labour of setting these innumerable soft-coloured tesseræ sealed the highest union of art and craftsmanship. Although on account of its jealous preservation the pavement is thus denied the casual visitor, there is nevertheless a valuable collection of Roman remains to be seen in the Dominican monastery at Woodchester.

The Nailsworth stream joins the Frome below Stroud, where the main valley begins to broaden towards its mouth. The flanking hills now stand further and further apart to marshal Stroudwater to the Severn; on the north the high ground about Randwick from Doverow Hill to Haresfield Beacon overlooks the passage of the Frome across the low level fields on this side of Severn, while opposite range the headlands of Selsley and Sandford Knoll with the great promontory of Frocester Hill beyond. All these hills are richly wooded on their lower slopes, but the highest among them thrust bare wind-swept heads out of the cloaking beeches.

Doverow Hill—for how could "Devereux" survive in this humble, English countryside?—has an ugly gash across its face, a wound kept open by the inappropriate brickworks of Stonehouse. In 1736 the curate at Stonehouse Church was George Whitefield, son of the landlord of the Bell at Gloucester, who had forsaken the life of a pot-boy for that of a poor student of divinity. At Oxford he became one of the group that foregathered in John Wesley's rooms at Lincoln, and by their regular observance of religious duties gained the name of Methodists. Whitefield was

PAINSWICK CHURCHYARD.

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perhaps the most thorough-going member of the "Holy Club," and the most anxious to advance beyond the bounds of orthodoxy. At Stonehouse, his charge immediately after ordination, he preached the first of those open-air sermons at which Wesley himself was at first inclined to look askance, but which became the means of so great an evangelizing campaign across the breadth of England.

Whitefield was a preacher of remarkable eloquence, so that his vast congregations were invariably moved to tears, sometimes of contrition, sometimes of joy; this first sermon outside Stonehouse Church was preached in a great storm, and yet the people all stayed rapt until he had finished, mingling their tears with the streaming rain. His curacy here lasted only a few weeks, but in 1739 he was back again, journeying from village to village and preaching often four times a day. This note in his journal for 1739 is a typical entry: "*July* 15*th.* Twice in Randwick Church, and in the evening was enabled to lift up my voice like a trumpet to about 20,000 on Hampton Common." But the people of Minchinhampton were not all won over by Whitefield's stirring homilies, and the local Methodists suffered no little persecution; four years after he left Stonehouse, we have him writing

to Wesley an account of the successful action brought at Gloucester assizes by "some people called Methodists and certain persons of the town of Minchinhampton." He tells how "the Grand Enemy of Souls stirred up many of the baser sort, that they came to the Number of near a Hundred, in their usual Way, with a Low-bell and Horn, forced into Mr. Adams's House, wherein he was preaching, and threw him into a Skin-Pit full of noisome Things and stagnated Water."

Stonehouse is the last village of Stroudwater before that valley loses itself in the wide vale of Severn. The Frome and the canal go down to the river between rich pasture-lands, leaving on their left the birthplace of Fair Rosamond—Frampton with its Elizabethan houses and quiet cottages beside the broad green, to run into the Severn at the northern branch of the great horseshoe bend that sweeps past Newnham and bears Arlingham and Fretherne as it were in the hoof.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VALE OF BERKELEY

South of the shallow basin of the lower Frome the rich green vale of Berkeley stretches away towards Bristol, gradually broadening into a wide plain. The district differs from the level land about Gloucester in that it is more purely pasture, the farms are larger, there are fewer orchards, and it is pre-eminently the dairy country of agricultural Gloucestershire.

The vale is bounded on the east by a short and broken range of hills, nameless, but actually outliers of the southern Cotswolds. At the head of the vale this high land is striking and well marked, a confusion of steep and isolated hills and prominent knolls, but south of Wotton-under-Edge the sharp slopes merge into rolling uplands that carry no clear-cut edge against the Severn plain as they shelve away to the Bristol Avon.

The country of high and amply wooded bluffs in

its north-eastern corner is the most lovely part of the Berkeley vale. A continuous but irregular range of hills borders the bay in which lie Uley and Dursley, and although this inlet is geographically akin to that of Stroudwater, its character is its own: there are no tributary valleys of importance, the tiny stream coming down from the springs on either side of Owlpen has turned few mill-wheels, no railway intrudes beyond Dursley, nor are there any of those hamlets that are scattered in profusion about the headstreams of Frome. Into the upper reaches of this quiet, beautiful valley, so entirely walled off from the rest of the country and yet so very English, you may come from the lower hills of Stroudwater by way of Frocester Hill to Uley.

Just as Cleeve and Leckhampton are vantage-points for the whole plain of Gloucester, so Frocester Hill stands out above the central portion of the Gloucestershire lowland. From the very foot of the hill is spread a level pattern of fields and farmsteads, threaded artlessly with the high hedges of lanes that wind through the countryside as only the lanes of this county can. Not assertively, but each clear and sharp above the elms of hedgerow and copse, the spires of village churches are the only

AMBERLEY.
The house on the left is Rose Cottage.

MINET PUB
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obvious work of man. And these are so shapely, so mellow in tone, that they seem a very natural part of the scene—Frocester in the foreground, over to the left Coaley, then Cambridge, Slimbridge, and Frampton against the river. It is a humble, unpretentious landscape, the more beautiful by the grandeur of its setting. In the south the bold line of Cam Long Down turns the eye across to the gleaming patches of water where Severn shows herself from point to point. Beyond rise the soft blue uplands of Dean, and further yet the mountains of Wales height after height pale into the distance. Far over the Severn's horseshoe bend a jagged line in the sky shows where Malvern carries this dim, high background out of sight.

To come suddenly out on to Frocester Hill when an autumn sun is setting over Wales is to be taken unaware by the rich and solemn beauty of the view, and to marvel that even in nature there should be so great a loveliness.

The Court in Frocester village is one of several country houses in which Elizabeth was received when she came down to slaughter the Earl of Berkeley's deer, and the great medieval tithe barn stands to-day almost as perfect as at its building over six hundred years ago. A Benedictine

monastery at Gloucester held the manor of Frocester in the thirteenth century, and this barn was set up by the abbot, wherein to collect from each tenant of the manor a tenth part of his produce. Two hundred feet long, with its stoutly buttressed walls and a splendid timber roof, the huge barn of Frocester is a clear signpost to the source of the Church's wealth in the Middle Ages; this is the largest of the tithe barns still standing in England, but each county must have had many of equal size.

The way to Uley lies over the hills past the little village of Nymphsfield, which is not unworthy of its name, to the top of Crawley Hill. Here it is well to leave the highroad and go off on the right to the remarkable rectangular tableland called Uley Bury. This is the largest and finest of the Roman encampments that crown the edge of the hills from Bath to Bredon.

On the high ground leading to the Roman camp is a hillock known locally as Hetty Pegler's Tump, but famous among antiquarians, archæologists, and historians as the Uley Bury Tumulus. This is a splendidly preserved barrow or burying-place of the Britons who lived among these hills before the time of recorded history, having only flint implements for use in peace and war, and for a covering

merely the skins of wild beasts and the juice of the woad plant that grew until comparatively recently in the Uley valley. The tumulus is oval in shape, a "long barrow," and when it was opened a hundred years ago was found to hold the bones of over thirty bodies. The interior of the sepulchre is divided by great stone slabs into a number of chambers remarkably clearly defined, so that it is possible to visualize without effort the primitive burial on the hill-top, a brilliant shaft of light in the darkness of pre-history.

The Roman camp on Uley Bury is a modern institution beside the tumulus. It covers the whole of the level tableland, and is surrounded by a double line of *agger* and *vallum*, the bank and ditch which the Legions cast round their camps, even if halting for one night on the march. Below the earthworks the hill slopes steeply on every side, so that the military sense, ready to take advantage of natural contour, perfected here an impregnable fortress. By the finished and regular character of its fortifications the Uley camp would appear to have been regarded as one of the strongest links in that chain of outposts built by the invaders to keep the native Britons in the fastnesses of Wales, whither they were driven by Ostorius Scapula early in the first

century. Roman sentinels along the western wall of the camp could command a wide sweep of the Severn plain, though their southward gaze was limited by three island hills and the wooded bluff of Stinchcombe.

In breadth and grandeur the view from Uley Bury falls short of the marvellous outlook from Frocester, but on two sides the foreground is remarkable. On the south-west stands Stinchcombe Hill at the opposite side of the mouth of the Uley and Dursley valley, while full in the lowland between rise two extraordinary, isolated hills ; Long Down is like the roof of a great barn, its bracken-clad sides supporting a gable ridge that is no more than a cart-track broad, and, across a narrow ravine, Peak Down is a clear-cut cone with a little crater at its summit. Long Down may have been moulded between two tides of the waters that once filled the valley, but how the Peak was given such an astonishingly regular shape is a problem that may well have driven generations of local folk to fall back on the devil and his great sieve. Downham, another lonely hill a little further back in the valley, has a striking avenue of elms along its crest—not unlike a May Hill in miniature. Until a few years ago the ruins of a smallpox hospital stood stark against the sky on

Downham, wherefore among the older people this is known as Smallpox Hill.

Under the lee of the Bury, Uley village straggles down its one steep street, and beyond are beech woods sloping from the skyline into the green coombs at the head of the valley. In a deep hollow under these hills is the delightful little Tudor manor house of Owlpen, hidden among shapely yews.

When Stroud was dyeing its noble scarlets, every other cottage on the Uley hillside resounded to the rattle of hand-looms, for this was the home of that fine blue broadcloth without a coat of which no gentleman could be fitly dressed. The worthy clothier who introduced the manufacture of kerseymere was honoured above his fellows by an inscription in the church: "Behind this Wall lyes the Body of John Eyles aged 91 years and ye first that ever made Spanish Cloath in ys psh. To whose gratefull memory this Monument was erected by M. Bayly Gent of Wresden 1731," and below is a merchant's mark. Wresden, above the stream between Uley and Dursley, is still inhabited; it carries Eyles' initials and the date 1665, while a great Jacobean bedstead is very likely the one on which the old man died a couple of hundred years ago. With anxious eye Uley saw the coming of the

power loom, and soon the merry clatter in the cottages was silenced, no more was heard across the valley the ceaseless creak of water-wheels, and night and day men missed the rhythmic beat of the hammering stocks.

Sheltered as Uley is on every side save the west, the one town of this lovely valley is altogether set about with hills. You should come upon Dursley from the hills, by the steep winding road called Whiteway—though its naturally bright surface is metalled now with steel-blue stone—because from the point where this road swings down out of the beech woods you may look right over the town and up the Severn plain to the Malverns. Dursley nestles so closely against the wooded slopes of Stinchcombe that, as an Elizabethan market town, it must have been very nearly successful in hiding itself completely from the world; but modern cottages, however modest, paint the view with gay patches of brick that have grace enough to blush for the old-time chastity of weather-beaten stone. Beyond the square grey tower of the church two considerable mills mark the course of that stream which, rising from the springs about Owlpen, gathers the waters of this valley and as the little river Cam goes down to Severn.

In the reign of the first Edward Plantagenet Dursley boasted a castle and held the dignity of one of the five ancient boroughs of Gloucestershire, probably on account of its connection with the great feudal family of Berkeley. But when Leland made his Itinerary in the middle of the sixteenth century and bestowed upon it his customary adjective of approval, this "praty cloathing town" had a more genuine title to importance, for it was then "well occupied with cloathiers." The hand-loom weavers of Dursley did a prosperous trade in that fine broadcloth for which the valley was famous, and they flourished exceedingly until the coming of the power looms; even then this was one of the last strongholds of the cottage spinning-wheel, and so fierce was the opposition to steam-driven machinery that in 1825 the 12th Lancers and the 2nd Dragoon Guards descended on the little town to quell the riots.

Two hundred years ago and more there was a proverb common throughout England, even among such as knew nothing of the West Country, by which any sharp over-reaching bargainer was said to be "a man of Dursley." Whether or not the local merchants had truly earned their town this unhappy notoriety, the generous Fuller tempered its edge:

"Sure I am, there was a *man of Duresley*, who was a *man of men*, Edward Fox by name, a right godly and gracious prelate." Fox became Bishop of Hereford, and it was through him that Wolsey first heard of Thomas Cranmer and his astute solution of their royal master's matrimonial problem. In an age remarkable for the clumsiness of its intrigues and the lack of finesse among its politicians, Fox was a diplomat of outstanding skill, "the principal pillar of the Reformation, as to the managery of the politic and prudential part thereof, being of more activity and no less ability than Cranmer himself."

The Whiteway road leads into Dursley through Woodmancote, now part of the town, but once a separate hamlet, concerning which a debatable but exceedingly interesting theory may be formed in regard to an obscure period in the life of William Shakespeare. It is known that in the autumn of 1585 he fled from Warwickshire before the wrath of Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlcote; Davies, vicar of Sapperton in this county at the end of the seventeenth century, declared that the offence was deer-stealing and the punishment severe, though by the grace of God it was not that blinding with hot irons that commonly ended the careers of venison poachers in England. Our most definite knowledge

of Shakespeare's movements is of his presence in a company of actors in London during the winter of 1586. Thus there is a period of fifteen months without any record of his doings, and it is at this time that the rascally young ballad-writer may have lain low at Dursley. Contemporary parish registers in the district bear the names Shakespeare and Hathaway, perhaps convenient relations for one who found it wise to avoid Stratford for a space.

In the second part of *King Henry IV.*, Act V., Scene 1, Justice Shallow's steward, Davy, asks a favour of his master in his official capacity of local magistrate: "I beseech you, sir, to countenance William Visor of Woncot against Clement Perkes, of the Hill." The original Quarto has "Womcot," a common colloquialism for Woodmancote, while Stinchcombe Hill has always been known locally merely as "the Hill." The connection of the Vizard family with Woodmancote goes back definitely to the days of Queen Elizabeth, a few years after whose death the bailiff of Dursley was Arthur Vizard. Shakespeare had probably heard the name spoken as he spelt it, but had never seen it written. At the end of the last century there was known on the Hill the site of a house wherein once lived a family named Perkes or Perkis, and in a local parish

register occurs an entry of the birth of a Clement Perkes in 1568, a yeoman who would have been four years Shakespeare's junior and quiet conceivably an acquaintance.

Another play, *King Richard II.*, suggests the poet's personal knowledge of Stinchcombe Hill. Northumberland and Bolingbroke with their forces are in the "wilds of Gloucestershire," and when the latter asks young Harry Percy how far it is to Berkeley he is told, "There stands the castle, by yon tuft of trees." Stinchcombe is the only point on "these high wild hills" whence Berkeley Castle may be so viewed, and the scene is a striking one that it might well be fresh in the eye after eleven years.

Again, there was the libellous proverb of the double-dealing "men of Dursley," which seems to put beyond coincidence Shallow and Slender on the Hill, with their lamented friend Double of the neighbouring town.

Much of this evidence, if such it may be called, was set out by Dr. Madden* and unhesitatingly accepted by Shakespeare's greatest biographer, Sir Sidney Lee. Recently, however, the Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, has published an in-

* A. H. Madden: *The Diary of Master William Silence.*

genious conjecture* in favour of a Wincot in Polesworth parish, dismissing the Dursley Woodmancote because it is over fifty miles from Shakespeare's home, and asking why a schoolboy or apprentice should trudge that distance to and fro. But against this objection it may be submitted that Shakespeare did not travel this distance to and fro, but came here at the age of twenty-one or twenty-two on one lengthy visit; Parson Davies tells us that after the deer-stealing escapade Shakespeare wrote a scathing ballad on Sir Thomas Lucy, and it seems at least probable that he found it imperative to retire secretly into the hills at a safe distance from Stratford. Then, again, Falstaff tells John of Lancaster, "I'll through Gloucestershire; and there will I visit Master Robert Shallow, esquire." He is speaking in Yorkshire, and he says he will go *through* Gloucestershire.

Finally, through the woods to the Hill there is a pathway called Shakespeare's Walk; nearly one hundred years ago this was stated to be a *traditional* name, and, while short-lived local lore is untrustworthy, it is most doubtful whether in any other district such sustained tradition has challenged the monopoly of Arden.

* Arthur Gray: *A Chapter in the Early Life of Shakespeare.*

On Stinchcombe Hill the golfer may be even more distracted than on Minchinhampton, for this high peninsula stands further out in the plain towards Severn than do any of the Cotswold vantage-points, so that on a clear day you can follow the river from a few miles below Gloucester right down the valley, till it broadens above Beachley, receives the Wye and passes out into the Bristol Channel. Drakestone Point, the most westerly promontory of the Hill, is notched with the earthworks of Britons and Romans, who could hardly fail to build a camp and a look-out on such a commanding height. The keen-eyed watchman on this hill, poised like a hawk above the valley, would cover the old passage of the Severn at Aust and discover with little difficulty any considerable body of warriors coming east across the plain from this point to the Frome.

Given good visibility, one may see in the south the high ground above Bath and, further west, beyond the cloud of smoke hanging over Bristol, the islands off the Somerset coast. Across Severn the rugged Brecknocks and the unmistakable Sugar Loaf above Abergavenny are a dim background to the smoky, wooded hills of Dean. As the view sweeps north, crested May Hill gives way

THE DUTCH HOUSE, BRISTOL.

to the gaunt Beacons of the Malvern Hills, misty and blue through more than twenty miles of haze. Glasses will pick out the low square tower of Tewkesbury Abbey directly up the valley, but they are not needed to find the graceful pinnacles of Gloucester golden in the evening sun like the tower of some delectable cathedral in an Arcadian Lilliput. Further east the brow of the Hill cannot give so broad or so distant a scene, but the mouths of the Stroudwater and Dursley valleys with their dividing hills lie below as if modelled in an exquisitely tinted relief map. It is difficult to write with moderation of the range of vision from Stinchcombe Hill, yet to say that no more varied and inspiring view may be found through all Gloucestershire is to set its praise within altogether too small a compass.

Next to Stinchcombe on the south, and the last of the line of outposts down the vale, is Nibley Knoll with its conspicuous slender monument to William Tyndale. Although there is no documentary proof that Tyndale was born in North Nibley parish, the tradition rests on a quantity of very good evidence. Definite knowledge of his life in this countryside begins with his appointment in 1521 as tutor in the household of Sir John

Walsh at Sodbury Manor, some seven miles south of Nibley. In this quiet house above the vale of Berkeley, Tyndale continued the line of thought he had begun at Oxford and at Cambridge, daily seeing more clearly that the darkness in which the people of England dwelt under Rome could be rolled away only when every man might read the Bible for himself in his own tongue. So here, in a county more priest-ridden perhaps than any other, he determined to break the Papal despotism based on the ignorance of the people. To a bishop of the Church, visiting Sodbury, he burst out, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scriptures than thou doest," and the die was cast—loaded how heavily against him.

Two men before Tyndale had translated parts of the Scriptures into English, and both had lived within sight of Nibley Knoll: John Trevisa, Vicar of Berkeley, and John Wycliffe, Rector of Aust. But neither of these could give effect to their work through print. Tyndale hastened to Wittenberg, where the presses of the new art had been set up and where the Reformation had its home, and there in one busy year he translated the New Testament from the original Greek into that stately, beautiful

prose which has stood ever since as the standard of English writing. Six thousand copies of the English Testament were printed: one copy alone is known to-day, in the Baptist College at Bristol.

Of the smuggling of the Bibles into England, of their burning, of Tyndale's hunted life in the Low Countries, and of his martyrdom at the stake in the castle court at Vilvorde, there is not room to tell. Remembering these things, you may climb into the gallery of the monument on Nibley and look out over the green countryside he knew, his own familiar corner of the England for which he lived and died. "So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

Wotton-under-Edge is the last of the towns under the Cotswold escarpment, because from this point southwards the irregular ravined hills are smoothed out into comparatively featureless, gently sloping uplands; the town has more of history than importance, as one may tell by its church and the gabled houses against its steep and perilously narrow streets. Beyond Wotton Hill the most commanding knoll is marked by a tower to the memory of General Lord Robert Somerset, built on the nearest prominence to Badminton—the great seat of the Beauforts standing some three miles back on the

borders of the county—and thence the Bath road goes past the Sodburys to Dyrham, where was fought on Hinton Hill a battle of the first importance in British history.

At the beginning of the fifth century the Romans left Britain in a peculiarly vulnerable state, her native tribes softened by long years of comparative inaction, having forgotten the arts of war, yet sadly imperfect in the lessons of civilization. So the country was fair prey for Teuton invaders, and by deliberate stages the Anglo-Saxon armies advanced across Britain from south and east. By 557 Ceawlin, King of the West Saxons, had pressed so far west that only a narrow strip of land between the Severn and the upper Thames stood out against him, and at Dyrham he met the united forces of the three British kings who ruled this valley. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records the result in one terse entry: "In this year Cuthwire and Ceawlin fought against the Britons, and they slew three kings, Commail, and Condidan, and Farinmail, at the place which is called Deorham, and took three cities from them, Gloucester, and Cirencester, and Bath." The victory brought Ceawlin all the land between the Somerset Avon and Arden, sending the Britons across into the fastnesses of Wales, where they were

secure, as the Saxon king discovered seven years later, when he received a very definite check, probably at Fretherne, and "after taking many towns and spoils innumerable, returned wrathful to his own land."

Berkeley, the chief town in the vale in point of interest, has a medieval baronial castle so perfectly preserved that it is still a private residence, as inaccessible to-day as when men-at-arms stood along the wall and there was water in the moat. A few years ago, however, one might on certain days explore the great hall, the battlements, and the little chamber where Edward II. was foully done to death; and the guide would swing his lantern down through an awful depth of dark gloom to the slimy floor of the dungeon, whence rose the occasional scurry of a rat among the toads that sat stupidly under the lantern.

Although Berkeley Castle may seem now to hold a distinctly disadvantageous position, when Henry II. built it for Robert Fitzhardinge it was as secure as any feudal fortress, crowning a mound of high ground in the midst of almost impassable marshes and holding the road up the valley. Thomas, Lord Berkeley, was found on the side of Queen Isabella and the Despencers against the weak and foolish

Edward II. and his provoking Gascon favourite, Piers Gaveston, and when the king was captured Berkeley received him as prisoner at the castle. This pitiful son of the great Plantagenet was roughly and insolently treated at Berkeley in the hope that he might die naturally; Christopher Marlowe, who made a fine tragedy of the story, makes Maltravers complain to his fellow regicide, Gurney:

> I wonder the king dies not,
> Being in a vault up to the knees in water,
> To which the channels of the castle run,
> From whence a damp continually ariseth,
> That were enough to poison any man,
> Much more a king brought up so tenderly.

But Edward survived the dungeon, and Maltravers had to wait until an ingeniously ambiguous message came from that humane prelate the Bishop of Hereford, "Edwardum occidere nolite timere bonum est"—leaving any who read to put the comma before or after *timere* at his own responsibility. So on September 21, 1327, Lord Berkeley was packed off to his manor at Wotton, and at midnight the king was cruelly murdered. Thus ended a reign full of tragedy, and a life for which there may be pity but no sympathy. The abbots of Kingswood, Bristol, and Malmesbury were

fearful of burying the body in their churches, but John Thokey came out from Gloucester and took the king back to be a lasting source of glory to his cathedral.

Another royal visit, scarcely less creditable, was that of Elizabeth in 1573, when in one day she slew twenty-seven head of the "shy-eyed delicate deer" in Lord Berkeley's park. The lord of the castle was away at the time and, not unnaturally, he grumbled a little at the massacre; but the queen let it be known that my Lord Leicester had taken a liking to Berkeley Castle and its estates, so the complaining was discreetly silenced.

Berkeley Church is remarkable for its detached tower, further removed from the castle than if it had been built on to the church, and therefore perhaps owing its position to military architects who placed it beyond the service of any useful purpose when an assault was intended to the castle. This incompleteness in the building itself is the more noticeable on account of the impressive west front of the church, with its five graceful lancet windows. Memorials and tombs to the Berkeleys beautify the interior, and there is a window to the memory of Edward Jenner, who was born and buried in this parish. Jenner learnt the secret of vaccination from

a Sodbury milkmaid, and gave such popularity to his discovery that he was bombarded with foreign orders of nobility and with money gifts, and in 1814 the Emperor of the Russias came to visit him. But he preferred a quiet country life, and we find him writing nature poetry, reading a paper on the cuckoo to the Royal Society, and forming societies of his medical friends in the neighbourhood; the "Medico-Convivial" met at the Fleece Inn, Rodborough, and the "Convivio-Medical" at the Alveston Ship, but whether the transposition of the adjectives had any significance cannot be discovered.

At the Bell at Berkeley Heath, further down the vale, Mr. Pickwick and his friends stopped to change horses on their way to Birmingham, and under the direction of Mr. Bob Sawyer an excellent lunch was served, with bottled ale and the best madeira. The inn, with its proud and confident notice that Charles Dickens and party dined there, is now a private house.

Before it reaches Thornbury the Bristol road divides; one arm goes over Milbury Heath and the other keeps through low-lying fields beside Severn till it reaches Thornbury. Here is a Tudor castle begun by that Duke of Buckingham who was rash enough to cross Wolsey's path; Henry VIII. stayed for a

short time at the castle, and the mayor of Bristol, who was a discerning man, sent out ten fat oxen and forty sheep to the king and a silver cup to the queen. Thornbury is now remembered, more worthily, perhaps, as the home of W. G. and E. M. Grace. Leaving on one side Winterbourne, where lies Hickory Sterne, the reckless gallant of "Who will o'er the downs so free?", great stretches of straight road now lead due south to Bristol.

CHAPTER IX

BRISTOL

Almost the whole of Bristol lies in Gloucestershire. The river Avon, flowing through the south part of the city, divides this county from Somerset; but it must be remembered that the boundary follows the windings of the floating harbour into which the course of the Avon was converted at the beginning of the last century, when the river was turned through a deep new cut, nearly two miles long, further south. Thus Temple Meads railway station, the important commercial thoroughfare of Victoria Street, and the parish of St. Mary Redcliffe are all in Somerset.

In a book of this nature, concerned primarily with the county of Gloucestershire, it is possible to treat of Bristol only in the very broadest outline; its old houses, its ecclesiastical buildings, two or three distinct periods of its history, its part in the seafaring of the English nation, its literary and dramatic

associations—each of these alone have made or might make at least one book.

From Temple Meads station you come into the heart of the city over Bristol Bridge to the tramway centre. Here is the end of a long arm of the harbour, formed from the last reach of the tributary Frome, and there is a smell of salt and shipping in the air, such as Jim Hawkins found when he came down to the docks to Long John Silver at the sign of the Spy-glass. This sea-water in the midst of Bristol, more than any monument, keeps green the memory of those citizens who were the first English adventurers beyond the seas.

The close of the fifteenth century was marked by a growing eagerness on the part of more imaginative merchants to sail westwards to Cathay, the land of gold and silver, spicery and precious stones. Instead of a clear passage to China they found the way barred, as Hakluyt tells, by "those large and ample countreys extended Northward from the Cape of Florida, the first discovery of whose coasts (never heard of before) was well begun by John Cabot the father and Sebastian, his sonne, an Englishman borne, who were the first finders out of all that great tract of land which they brought and annexed unto the crowne of England." John Cabot, a Genoese

navigator and trader who had settled in Bristol, set out from the Avon in the tiny *Matthew* at the beginning of May, 1497, with his son, who may have been born in the city, and on June 24 discovered the coast of Newfoundland, all unaware that he had found the New World, and thinking that he had arrived thus soon at the kingdom of the Grand Cham. Columbus, striking the continent further south, made his "discovery" in the next year. In 1498, too, the king of Spain received a letter from his embassy at London to warn him that "the people of Bristol have for the last seven years every year sent two, three or four light ships in search of the Island of Brazil and the Seven Cities."

John Cabot sailed home in August, bringing three savages as a present for Henry VII., and two months later a fellow-countryman wrote to Venice: "The king has given him money wherewith to amuse himself, and he is now at Bristol with his wife and son. He is styled the 'Great Admiral.' Vast honour is paid him; he dresses in silk, and these English run after him like mad people." The next English voyage to the west, and the only one in the reign of Henry VIII., was that of Robert Thorne of Bristol, who set out for the north-west passage in 1527 with the *Samson* and the *Mary of*

Guildford, "having in them divers cunning men, to seek strange regions." But his expedition fell foul of the ice off Labrador, and proved abortive.

From this time the merchants and seamen of the city regularly made adventurous voyages for trade with the West Indies, the Canaries, the Levant, Morocco, and the Barbary coast, as well as with the New World. They developed into a corporate body, the "Fellowship of Merchants," and Edward VI. granted a charter which incorporated them as the Merchant Venturers of Bristol. Their commerce on the high seas was never a peaceable pursuit, and it was inevitable that the Merchant Venturers should have a considerable part in the naval warfare of their country. So it came about that the *Great Unicorn*, the *Minion*, and the *Handmaid* went down from Bristol to the English Channel to join the fleet against the Armada; and eight years later a fishmonger of Bristol, John Hopkins, sailed his own ship in the descent of Essex on Cadiz. When Hopkins returned from that glorious raid he was met on the downs above the city and carried home in triumph, the people lighting "all their tallow candells, and a greate bonfire at the High Crosse very beautifull to beholde."

Of all the bold voyagers, merchants, colonists,

and pirates, you may read in the pages of the historians, and especially in that store of *Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries* collected by Richard Hakluyt, himself a prebendary of Bristol Cathedral for over thirty years. But the famous Captain Netheway cannot be passed by. With forty fighting men of Bristol aboard the *Angel Gabriel* he routed three Spanish ships of the line, and cost the enemy five hundred lives. A ballad, *The Honour of Bristol*, sings of the manner in which they met the odds against them:

> With that their three ships boarded us
> Again with might and main,
> But still our noble Englishmen
> Cry'd out, "A Fig for Spain!"
> Though seven times they boarded us
> At last we show'd our skill,
> And made them feel the force
> Of our Angel Gabriel.

From Bristol Bridge the High Street leads up to the spot where the High Cross stood, at the joining of this with Wine Street, Broad Street, and Corn Street, the last coming from the tramway centre. There are timbered houses yet standing to remind that these were the streets of the great merchants of the past, as they are even yet at the commercial centre of Bristol. Such are the

gabled Dutch House at the corner of High Street and Wine Street, a building of the seventeenth century, and the overhanging upper storey that gives Mary-le-Port Street the air of a byway in some town of medieval Germany.

The type and pattern of Bristol merchants is William Canynge, who flourished at the middle of the fifteenth century. His house in Redcliffe Street may still be seen. Canynge was master of the Fellowship of Merchants, and five times mayor of Bristol; he was the greatest English merchant of his time, holding a practical monopoly of the north European trade, and at the height of his prosperity he employed eight hundred seamen to handle his shipping, which fell little short of three thousand tons. In addition, he paid one hundred carpenters and masons, though most of these were probably at work on the rebuilding of the church of St. Mary Redcliffe. During the Wars of the Roses, William Canynge and his brother merchants were the chief upholders of the Yorkist cause in Bristol and the west, and after the final victory Edward IV. came to this city to be received with great state by the mayor and his people.

At the bottom of Broad Street, St. John's Church was built on the city wall, and its tower rises above

the only gate of Bristol that is left. This gateway is supported on either side by figures of Bristol's Romulus and Remus, two mythical founders who were named Belinus and Brennus. Beyond is the steep lane called Christmas Steps, and at its head the fifteenth-century chapel of the Three Kings of Cologne. Close by, on a hill overlooking the original city, is another of the great Elizabethan houses, the Red Lodge.

The way back to the tramway centre from this hill is down Colston Street, past a statue of Edmund Burke, whose great speeches, made in the city he represented from 1774 to 1780, had so profound a reaction on the laws of England. Lord Acton wrote of them as an epoch in our constitutional history: "Burke then laid down for ever the law of the relations between members and their constituencies."

The political mob of Bristol was notorious for its violence throughout the eighteenth century. In 1753 serious disturbances were led by the colliers from the Kingswood mines, who terrorized the city with savage demands for a reduction in the price of bread, and the rabble was finally ridden down by Dragoons brought post-haste from Gloucester. The outbreak in 1793 against

the toll charges made at Bristol Bridge occasioned the famous test case of troops firing on the mob after the reading of the Riot Act; the militia were fiercely assaulted in clearing the bridge, and in the heat of affray fired several volleys into the crowd in High Street, killing eleven and wounding many more.

But all previous disturbances pale before the Reform riots of October 29-30, 1831. The Recorder of Bristol was the leader of the opposition to the Bill, and his return to the city for the assizes was the signal for a great and angry gathering of the reformers, whose political intentions were soon lost to sight in an orgy of destruction, plundering, and drunkenness. October 29 was a Saturday. The formal opening of the assizes took place in the morning, when it was thought that the mob would be comparatively quiet, but the afternoon saw no dispersal, and frequent passages between the special constables and roughs in the crowd developed into a general attack on the Mansion House, which was carried by the rioters early in the evening. Troops arrived at nightfall, but it was not until midnight that a charge by the 14th Dragoons cleared Queen's Square. On the following morning, Sunday, the 30th, the rabble were at the Mansion House soon after daybreak, to find an entirely inadequate

guard of police; before midday the cellars of the city fathers had been sacked, so that the square flowed with red wine, and the Bristol streets became as those of Paris in July, 1789.

The Dragoons returned and the Riot Act was read at least three times, but the commanding colonel showed a criminal indecision that culminated in the troops being ordered out of the city because they were unpopular with the rioters! Towards evening the three gaols were stormed and vast hordes of criminals swelled the drunken mob. Everywhere it seemed that cellars were the objective, and an attempted attack upon the Cathedral petered out after a bonfire of the library in the chapter house. As darkness fell, it became more terribly clear how thorough was the destruction of the great houses and public buildings, for the flames of the burnings lit up all the countryside round about, and it is said that people at Chepstow could see to read in the open fields at midnight. Before the dawn of Monday morning, Major Mackworth galloped back into the city with his Dragoons, and unhesitatingly overrode the authority of the ineffective colonel; Queen's Square and the adjoining streets were quickly cleared by a succession of charges, and this time it was not the

flat of the sabre that was used. Monday's sun rose on a city quiet save for the cries of the drunken and the dying, and there was no further outbreak. The exact number of the dead was never known, but not less than five hundred are believed to have perished; some were cut down by the cavalry, others burned to death, but most were choked with wine.

Bristol Cathedral stands along the south side of the delightful, leafy College Green. All that remains of the original Norman abbey is the splendid chapter house, part of St. Augustine's gateway in Lower College Green, and the lower courses of the transept walls. On account of its disadvantageous position, or because of the greater glory of St. Mary Redcliffe, the Cathedral has never enjoyed the reputation it deserves for beauty of workmanship. Even if its exterior cannot compare with the grace and dignity of the tower and high nave that dominate Gloucester, the interior has much that is noteworthy. J. A. Symonds, visiting Bristol after one of his long sojourns abroad, did not restrain his enthusiasm: "On entering the Cathedral and seeing its beautiful bare aisles, I felt the whole superiority of English architecture over Belgian and even German. The massive mullions

and exquisite tracery of the windows, the grand roof with its clustered spandrels and lacy boss-work, the harmony of the parts produced by greater length, the purity of the bay arches and their moulded columns—all combine to exalt Bristol Cathedral over any I have yet seen abroad." And another critic, Pugin, leader of the Gothic revival in English building, wrote to a friend: "This Cathedral has been generally overlooked as undeserving of notice, but the fact is that there are parts about it equal to anything in the country. The groins of the aisles, the carving in part of the stalls, the vestry, the tombs in the aisles round the choir, the great east window, the Norman entrance to the Chapter House from the Cloisters, all are most interesting. . . . The east window is so truly beautiful that I have marked out the tracing of it for you. The original glass is still in it, and the effect is wonderfully rich and varied."

With the simple, massive pillars of that other Gloucestershire cathedral fresh in the mind's eye, the most striking impression of the nave is made by the slender columns, surrounded by still slighter stems of blue stone, that spring up to the high vaulted roof. Going down to the south transept, you may see the most ancient stonework in the

Cathedral, a Saxon coffin-lid carved with the Harrowing of Hell, whence tormented souls look up to the descending Saviour. A door from this transept gives on the great Norman chapter house, with its wide, toothed arches crossing in the roof, and walls richly arcaded and diapered. West of the chapter house is the Cloister Court, having on two sides cloisters lined with stone coffins.

From College Green the steep Park Street leads up towards Clifton, and at the top of the hill the majestic belfry tower of Bristol University lifts its head. This tower and the lofty hall from which it rises were completed in 1926 to crown a university largely built and endowed by the great tobacco merchants who are the descendants in tradition of those early merchant venturers to Virginia. A fine art collection and the Bristol Museum stand alongside, while opposite is the way to Brandon Hill and the Cabot Tower.

The Cabot Tower was set up at the end of the last century to honour the memory of John Cabot and his sons; it is a remarkable building, having near its roof four bays whence you may look out in every direction over the city and the downs. Due east, Bristol appears much more the abode of factories and tall chimneys than she does when you

are down among her streets; yet it is easy to pick out the low roof of the Cathedral, the strange top-heavy tower of St. Stephen's, built nearly five hundred years ago, and many another tower and steeple. There are copper plates fixed on the gallery sills of the Cabot Tower, and these range far afield with information of towns and countries; thus you may know that beyond the University lie Vienna and Constantinople. An arrow to the north-west bears the apt legend that there lies the land first seen by Cabot in 1497.

Piercing the veil of smoke, that hangs always over the harbour and beyond, is the peerless spire of St. Mary Redcliffe, "the pride of Bristowe and the Western londe," so beautiful that even Queen Elizabeth called it "the fairest, the goodliest and most famous parish church in England." The muniment room of St. Mary Redcliffe—in Somerset, alas!—recalls Bristol's most intimate association with literature, for it was there that Chatterton the boy revelled in the old manuscripts of the church, and it was in the muniment chests, he said, that he discovered the Rowley MSS.

Thomas Chatterton was born in 1752, son of a schoolmaster and cathedral chorister. His earliest efforts at literary composition were singularly pains-

taking; he manufactured elaborate pseudo-antique genealogies for two pewterers, Burgum and Catcott, and passed them off with the greatest success as originals. Encouraged by the praise and recompense of the pewterers, and seeking a short cut to fame, he next produced a series of genuinely beautiful poems, declaring them to be the work of Rowley, a Redcliffe monk and chaplain to William Canynge. The success of the Rowley poems and the warmth of their unsuspecting reception led him still further; Horace Walpole, the critic of the day, had just published his *Anecdotes of Painting*, and to him Chatterton sent what he called "Rowley's 'Ryse of Peyncteynge yn Englande,'" with a covering letter that explained how, "being versed a little in antiquitys, I have met with several curious manuscripts, among which the following may be of service to you in any future edition of your truly entertaining *Anecdotes of Painting*." Nor did Walpole discover the deception until he had made considerable investigation and called in other authorities. The boy now went up to London fired with the desire to become famous as a political pamphleteer; but there was no living to be made by satire, and at the age of eighteen he poisoned his starved body in a Holborn garret, to be buried in a

nameless grave at Shoe Lane Workhouse. To this "sleepless soul that perished in his pride" Coleridge dedicated his *Monody*, and, still greater gift, Keats his *Endymion*.

North-west of Brandon Hill the Avon goes out from Bristol through the Clifton gorge, where, as Robert Southey wrote, "the river runs between rocks and hanging wood; a scene truly magnificent, and wanting nothing but clearer water; the stream consists of liquid mud, and the gutter-like bed is hideous except when the tide is full." The Somerset side of this great chasm is clothed with the elms of Leigh Woods, clinging to the steep limestone slopes, but the Gloucestershire bank springs sheer three hundred feet from the river, so steep that only brambles and tenacious bushes find foothold on the bare rock. From the river the height of the towering walls is almost overwhelming; yet it is from the bottom of the ravine that Brunel's marvellous bridge is best appreciated, for then its gossamer beauty is seen against the sky, so that one wonders how an engineer could add still more grace to the exquisite work of nature.

A new road runs close against the right bank of the Avon, leading beside the river to Avonmouth, the water-gate of the western Midlands; and a

little beyond the suspension bridge this road leads under the shadow of St. Vincent's Rocks, precipices scarred with the quarries that called forth from Southey—born and bred in Bristol—the pitiful complaint that his fellows were "selling the sublime and beautiful by the boat-load." Above the rocks is a Roman camp, and thence the ground rises still further to the rolling downs.

CHAPTER X

THE FOREST OF DEAN

By far the larger part of Gloucestershire west of the Severn, and south of the road from Gloucester to Ross, is occupied by the Forest of Dean, a hilly, oak-clad countryside, contrasting as sharply with the rest of the county as any two landscapes that may be found in a country of such infinite variety as England. From wold and valley the Forest is separated by more than the mere breadth of a river; not only is the nature of the country entirely different, but the people are another race, small, dark, and having in their veins a full measure of Celtic blood. That these people should have preserved so long and so vigorously their individual characteristics is not to be thought remarkable when it is remembered that for hundreds of years they lived in the little world of the Free Miners of the Forest, apart from the rest of the country, in an inaccessible territory, and indepen-

dent of the laws and customs that grew and developed with the lengthening history of the English people.

Almost all the ancient chases of England diminished in size after they ceased to be royal preserves for the hunting of the deer, but the Forest of Dean has yielded little ground since the miners claimed their privileges within the bounds "between Chepstow's Bridge and Gloucester Bridge, the half of Newent, Rosse-Ashe, Monmouth's Bridge, and so far in the Seafome as the blast of a Horn or the voice of a Man may be heard." Only in the north, where the natural division has never been distinct, has the boundary shrunk within its anciently prescribed limits; Newent is no longer of the Forest, nor are the woods that stretch north from May Hill, but south of the road from Gloucester due east to Wales the Forest is in extent and appearance much as it always has been. On every side except this unmarked north the boundary is a river, for the Forest has preserved its character inviolable within the moated security of Wye and Severn; these two rivers leave the same rugged cradle of Plinlimmon, the one to take its leisurely way to Shrewsbury, to the orchards of Worcester and the fat pasture-lands of Gloucester, the other

to fret and hurry through a tortuous passage by way of Rhayader and the Black Mountains to the gorges of its lower course, till both encircle the Forest of Dean and go out together through the Bristol Channel to the sea.

Michael Drayton was ever prodigal in his praise of the countryside, and here, with better reason than he sometimes had, he does not hold his hand:

> The queene of forests all that west of Severn lie,
> Her broad and bushy top Deane lifteth up so hie,
> The lesser are not seen, she is so tall and large.

But it is not just loftiness or size that makes the beauty of the Forest, for this lies chiefly in the marvellous variety of its scenery. In older times a forest was not considered a mere area of unbroken woodland, but was regarded rather as a hunting preserve and therefore a district of copses and woods interspersed with downlands or Vert, on which the deer might graze, and in this particular as well as in most others the Forest of Dean keeps its original character. Masses of dense timbering break suddenly to give place to uneven stretches of close turf, smudged here and there with bracken and splashed almost everywhere with flaming gorse. On this open ground browse the lean forest sheep, the goats

and donkeys of the miners—for here the donkey is the common beast of burden—and all the hillocks on which they move are honeycombed with rabbit warrens.

White roads thread the Forest between the little towns, and they are unhedged, so that one may peer away between the oak trunks on either side to see deep green glades of unimagined beauty, sometimes a tiny pool dappled by sunlight through the branches overhead, and in late spring a pale blue mist hanging above the ground where bluebells crowd together in great patches of silvered azure. Small wonder that in this unknown, little-travelled land the fairy folk are not forgotten; even now one hears from time to time that a miner's children have seen the shy beings of that other world scurrying across a dingle or disappearing in the crannies of an old quarry. A stretch of level sward is hard to find in the Forest, for it is broken, hilly country and from the high ground above Cinderford or Drybrook or Coleford, for instance, it is possible to look out over a succession of hill-tops and valleys, all cloaked in the russet mantle of forest oak, golden brown where the sun catches the heights and a dim purple in the shadow of the troughs between.

A cloud of smoke over the trees, and often the

gaunt outrigging of pit gear against the sky, betrays the presence of a coal mine beneath, and about each of these have grown bare grey promontories of refuse. Less easy to discern are the overgrown outcrops of Roman iron-workings, for though the early invaders were quick to discover and appreciate the value of coal and ore in the Forest, their methods of smelting were imperfect and wasteful, causing great mounds of cinder and rubble to rise beside the furnaces. From this unexhausted material, thrown up by Rome, Edward I. obtained a valuable addition to his revenue through a process of re-smelting.

The Roman occupation and development of the Dean country followed, as elsewhere, upon military necessity. When the renowned Second Legion had fortified Gloucester, it marched beyond Severn and advanced through the Forest to Caerleon-upon-Usk, there to hold in check the restless fierce Silures who preyed on the fertile valley under the Cotswolds. Those who are curious in such matters can still find ample and illuminating evidences of Roman life; near Bream, where the iron-bearing rock rises naked above ground, there are deep fissures and fantastic hollows known generally as the Scowles, and in one instance as the Devil's Chapel, witnessing the Roman

method of obtaining ore in the simplest possible manner. Other diggings of the same period may be found elsewhere in the Forest, but these are the most striking. In Lydney Park the remains of an elaborate villa and temple have come to light, and in several places there have been discovered coins and implements of Roman making. But here again the clearest witnesses are the roads, the finest and most permanent legacy of the Cæsars in Britain; almost every highway used in the Forest of Dean to-day was cut and laid by the legionaries, and at rare intervals, on those roadways that are no longer travelled, paving and kerbstones are yet in place.

Three and a half centuries after the Romans left, Offa, King of Mercia, drew his great dyke from the mouth of the Dee to the Wye to be a rampart against the invasion of his domain by "the wylde Welshe menne." Traces of this broad ditch lie under fallen leaves in the woods about English Bicknor and Lydbrook Junction, at the point where it must have joined with the natural frontier of the river. The Saxon kings valued the Forest above all as a hunting ground, and the Danes, too, were careful to preserve it as a royal estate; for Edward the Confessor allowed three nobles to hold

land in Dean free of geld or tax for the service of guarding the Forest. Still later William the Conqueror, having forced his new possessions into peaceful acquiescence, was pleased to requite a warlike spirit and lust for blood with the hunting of the red deer and the wild boar that rooted the acorns in this forest; it is said that he was here in the spring of 1069, busy at the chase, when news came of Waltheof's rising against him in Northumbria, whereupon he swore by the splendour of the Almighty—his favourite oath—that not a rebel should remain alive. So for a time there was hunting of greater game than the pigs in the Forest of Dean.

As the years passed and men more frequently had respite from fighting, the Forest became increasingly appreciated for its minerals and timber as well as for its sport. In 1120 St. Briavel's castle was built by Milo Fitzwalter, first Earl of Hereford, to be a centre of defence against the Welsh and a stronghold for the maintenance of peace throughout the country between the lower Wye and the Severn. The eldest son of this most southerly of the marcher lords founded the Cistercian abbey of Flaxley, on the spot where his brother had been killed by an arrow while

hunting. Thus order and industry and the institutions of civilization were allowed to take root and grow in the Forest. It is probable that few of its royal owners overlooked the importance of iron ore in this border territory, but we have little record of its use; the Confessor shod his horses and nailed his ships with Dean Forest iron, and Cœur de Lion set out for the Holy Land with fifty thousand horseshoes from the Forest forges. These forges were a source of much complaining, for often the value of the timber they burnt as fuel exceeded the worth of their output, and from time to time it was necessary to forbid the iron-workers the consumption of all but dead boughs, or "dotard" trees, or limbs from oaks on the very outskirts of the woodland. It was long before the Forest was seriously regarded as anything but a royal game preserve. The quality of whose deer was evidently known to Henry III., who in the summer of 1231 ordered John, his huntsman, to go out from London to Dean and take harts for the king's table, and send off venison without delay to his cousin Eleanor.

The dissolution of the monasteries promised evil times for the Forest, because the planting and preserving of wide areas of timber had been the

constant care of Flaxley Abbey, into whose treasury went a large proportion of the tithes. Yet the reign of Elizabeth was to see Dean at the highest point of its national importance, for nowhere else in England grew so profusely the oaks that were to float the Queen's navy against the galleons of Spain, and carry her flag overseas into the New World. Camden has a story that the captains of the Armada sailed with particular instructions to lay waste the Forest of Dean and so cut the very roots of English naval power, and through all the years of our war with Spain there were rumours of enemy agents at work for the destruction of the oaks by whatever measures of treachery they could accomplish. Whether these suspicions were anything more than the wild reports passed from mouth to mouth in a country aflame with war, or whether they had some foundation in the far-reaching system of Spanish espionage, it is not possible to say, but it is worth remarking that both Raleigh and Drake were for a time stationed in houses on the forest shore of the Severn opposite Sharpness.

Under the later Stuarts, when colonial rivalry with the Dutch was becoming acute, and when Mr. Pepys was at the Navy Office, Dean Forest

oak held its place in the estimation of the Admiralty. With his accustomed zeal, the worthy Samuel notes down a good day's work begun betimes:

"20 *June*, 1662. Up by 4 or 5 o'clock, and to the office and there drew up the agreement between the King and Sir John Winter about the Forest of Dean; and having done it, he come himself, whom I observed to be a man of fine parts; and we read it, and both liked it well. That done, I turned to the Forest of Deane, in Speede's Mapps, and there he showed me how it lies; and the Leabayly with the great charge of carrying it to Lydney, and many other things worth knowing."

John Evelyn, another seventeenth-century diarist, had also known the Forest at its true worth, and showed much concern about the havoc of a great hurricane "subverting many thousands of goodly oaks, prostrating the trees, laying them in ghastly posture, like whole regiments fallen in battle by the sword of the conqueror."

The "man of fine parts," for whom Pepys had drawn up an agreement with Charles II., was that same Winter to whom Charles I. had virtually sold the Forest twenty years earlier. During the Civil War he had fortified his Lydney estate

and held out for the king, until Colonel Massey had the better of him, and this settlement was to do with the restoration of his rights by the royal martyr s son.

From earliest times it has been the practice of the Crown to hold the Forest lands direct, without the assistance of subtenants, and the isolated Stuart innovation of leasing out vast holdings to such as Sir John Winter found little favour with the Free Miners, who would own no master but the king and brook no clipping of their privileges. A typical protest was that made at Bicknor in the winter of 1631, when an angry crowd of five hundred foresters, "with two drums, two colours and a fife," assembled with pikes and guns before the house of Robert Bridges, agent of one of the lessees, and destroyed one hundred perches of ditching newly made for purposes of enclosure.

The history of the ancient rights of the Free Foresters and Miners of Dean is long and intricate. For nearly a thousand years, from the reign of Canute, the Forest has been ruled for the king by Verderers, and in the beginning these might punish with death any "trespassers of the Forest, of the Vert, and of the Venison"; less than three

THE FOREST, FROM ABOVE LITTLEDEAN.

hundred years ago the harrying of the king's deer involved maiming or loss of sight for those who were luckless enough to be caught.

The Verderers' Court and the Court of the Laws and Customs of the Miners were held at the Speech House in the heart of the Forest, and here the charters and privileges of the foresters were jealously upheld; the forest oath was taken upon a stick of holly, and no stranger or common lawyer was ever allowed to plead in the courts. Occasional local assizes took place elsewhere, as for example at Kensley in the reign of Elizabeth, when the court fined a number of lawless fellows who had been hunting with longbows and arrows with forked heads, collecting "okecornes," and "beatyng chestnutts." Down by Severn more serious offences sometimes went unpunished, for in 1344 an inquiry was set afoot to deal with the plundering of a ship of Majorca that had gone ashore on the coast of Dean, and a little later the merchants of Tewkesbury complained to Parliament that their cargoes bound for Bristol had been drawn on the rocks in these parts "with great ryot and strength in manner of warre." In listless times of peace little else could be expected, perhaps, of bowmen who took their holidays at the French wars.

In the church of Newland by Coleford one may gather some idea of the appearance of these medieval people. There a fifteenth-century brass shows a miner, cap on head, with a candle between his teeth, and on his back a wooden coal-carrier. On a tomb outside the church lies John Wyrall, a Free Forester who died in 1457; he is dressed for the chase, with a short voluminous frock above his long boots and, slung on either side, a horn and a hunting sword.

The office of Verderer remains, a high honour and nothing more, and, though there may be two opinions of the nature of their bonds, it is very certain that the miners of the Forest are no longer free. Forest and Vert are left, but the last of the Venison disappeared fifty years ago—because of the temptation of poaching. Instead of the huntsman's horn sounding a mort down the glades of the wood, steam whistles scream in the collieries among the hills, and often in the hollows mechanical saws drown with their rasping whirr the song of the thrush loyal to its thicket. But the unsightliness and clamour of modern industry do not dominate the Forest, and mostly it is one of the least altered features of the changing face of England.

He who wishes to go into the Forest of Dean from Cheltenham and Gloucester must take the road through the orchards of Minsterworth to where Westbury lies beneath its lonely oak-tiled spire. A short mile beyond Westbury the way divides, one branch bearing westward into the Forest, the other keeping close against the Severn, which here sweeps in a great horseshoe round Arlingham.

Newnham, the western port of a busy ferry, climbs up a steep hill at the very centre of the bend, and the high ground above the town is the only viewpoint on this side Severn that can compare with its counterparts ranged down the opposite escarpment of the Cotswolds. Immediately below are the cliffs whence Henry II. with Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke, set sail for Ireland in the days when a king's ships of war could ride the river as far as Gloucester, and beyond the broad waters of the Severn sea the vale spreads its green length before the blue curtain of the hills.

Very straight the road runs south through Blakeney and far down the fringes of the Forest to the Wye at Chepstow. Blakeney recalls the ancient Gloucestershire ballad of George Ridler's Oven, that was built with stones from Blakeney Quarry; this allegory was sung by the county's

faithful supporters of King Charles I., and it was one of the most ingenious means of disguising loyalty to the Crown during the Interregnum.

Back again at the fork outside Westbury, the road into the Forest comes first to Littledean, a tiny village hidden in a pass of the wooded hills, and thence it climbs a long, steep ascent on to the main plateau of the Forest. This hill is cut in the centre of a side of the tableland that stretches almost straight for three miles, so that both north and south one may see the dense oak woods pouring over the edge into the valley. A little further on is Cinderford, one of the important mining towns, no more beautiful than its name. Flaxley Abbey lies in a sheltered valley over the outlying hill to the north-east of Littledean; archæologically the remains are insignificant, for only the ruins of a great refectory are left, but it is worth while to climb in the steps of the Cistercian brothers to the hillside above their abbey and look out over pasture and orchard to the winding Severn and the cathedral tower of Gloucester.

From Bristol and the vale of Berkeley the entry into the Forest is by way of Sharpness, "the haven under the hill," and the great railway bridge that so gracefully spans the Severn where the river is

nearly a mile wide. Lydney, where the line crosses the Chepstow road, is the first town beyond Severn. Once the busy port of the Forest, the chief interest of Lydney for the greater world to-day lies in the park, where are considerable remains of an important Roman station. The railway now strikes straight into the heart of the Forest, through Whitecroft and Parkend to Speech House; that journey is not comfortable, for it seems as if the ancient oaks had thrust out their gnarled roots to upset the track of this latter-day intruder.

The Speech House, solidly built in the reign of Charles II. to be the Court of the Verderers and of the Free Miners, is now the only hotel within the Forest, though of inns there are plenty. The ancient court room with its judicial daïs has changed scarcely at all since the days when it saw pleadings and judgments, and here, between walls bearing a host of noble antlers, you may dine with the ghosts of Verderers, Rangers, Freemen of the Forest, and trespassers of the Vert and Venison. Broad rides and walks were laid out round the Speech House at its building, and there still flourish oaks that must have been old trees even then, as well as great beeches and marvellously stout trees of holly—no longer rifled for the miners' pledge.

The house itself is almost a mile from Speech House Road station, whence the train will take you to Cinderford and, doubling back in its track, on through some of the finest woodland in the Forest to Lydbrook, where a narrow valley goes down to the Wye. On the opposite bank of the river the little church of Welsh Bicknor serves to remind that this is the limit of Gloucestershire, and the old frontier of England. Here, with some relief, the railway may be left behind and the river-side road followed to Lydbrook Junction, where it strikes inland, as it were, and leads up to English Bicknor through a glen of such beauty as passes the pale art of words. Beyond a few fields comes a wood that is of the Wye and not of the Forest, and so by winding paths through close-set beech and bramble you come out upon the open summit of the Coldwell rocks ; to turn the corner of a woodland lane and find oneself thus suddenly set on the crown of a sheer crag, the river infinitely far away beneath, is to catch the breath in wonder that this is England. Point after point, the rugged cliffs raise their bare heads above the woods and bushes of their steep lower slopes, ranging along the side of the gorge until they end in the great rock towering above the rapids of Symonds Yat.

Standing on this vantage-point over the Yat, with the cliffs falling away precipitously beneath one's feet to deep and densely wooded gullies among the bewildering meanders of the Wye, is to marvel again that this can be Gloucestershire and England, so far from these tumultuous, rugged wilds seem the soft colourings and restful outlines of the wolds. Yet there can be no other landscape quite like this. There comes to mind, perhaps, that stretch of the Rhine between Coblence and Bonn, where the castled crags of the Drachenfels spring out of vine-clad slopes about the river; but there the painting is with a bigger brush, and the canvas broader—besides, steamers and tugs and barges move across the picture, and these can never be thought of on the Wye.

The road from Symonds Yat back into the Forest crosses a shoulder of the hill on which stands the hamlet of Christ Church, and, fetching a curve of some six miles from Coleford, comes out again into the open fields about St. Briavels, a village on the edge of the escarpment which here falls down into the broadest reach of the lower Wye valley. The medieval castle of St. Briavels was built on the highest point of the ridge to be the last of a line of bastions from Chester to this

place, set up by the Lords of the Marches against the Welsh. Two great round entrance towers of red sandstone are the chief remains of the castle, and these stand close against the road; almost the full circle of the broad moat may be traced, but it has long since been dry.

Rather than the Chepstow road, which keeps to the high ground behind the ridge, a lane should be followed down into the valley towards Tintern, for although the Abbey lies across the river in Monmouthshire, Gloucestershire claims the view of it. And it was on the Gloucester bank that William Wordsworth wrote the *Lines composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the Banks of the Wye:*

> Once again
> Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
> That on a wild secluded scene impress
> Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
> The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
>
> * * * * *
>
> Once again I see
> These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines
> Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms
> Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
> Sent up in silence from among the trees.
>
> * * * * *

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O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer through the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And this was the poet of the English lakes.

Below Tintern, on this side of the river, rises the lofty Wyndcliff, rivalling the splendour of Symonds Yat. Here a steep wall of rosy sandstone springs straight from the river-bank, and over its face tumble bushes, ferns, bramble and mosses to meet wych-elm and beech that are rooted under the cliff. So the Wye goes down to the sea with all her colours flying, for now she is nearing Chepstow, and already she feels the tide.

These precipitous cliffs on the Gloucester bank continue till they stand over Chepstow and her castle, then shelve out to the little "seaside" town of Beachley at the confluence of the rivers of Plinlimmon. The road back to Gloucester lies along the skirts of the Forest past Lydney to the heights above Newnham, where it is well to go up to the point called Pleasant Stile and there wait for sunset. Then, with the evening light slanting over the Forest behind, you may see long reaches of the Severn gleam through the gathering purple in the vale, and the great ramparts of the Cotswolds north and south fade in the dusk.

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